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There's No Place Like A Mattamy Home.



## Calatrava audit shows "issues"

By RICK BELL, CALGARY SUN

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It's not good but we can't see it yet and won't see it until it will be too late for council to do anything about it.

The report of an investigation into the awarding of city contracts, including the \$25 million designer Bridge Too Much, the made-in-Spain span over the Bow, is done.

The city auditor's findings are on paper. They aren't pretty and we wait.

We wait. The paper shufflers have the report. They have had it almost a month.

They will have it another two weeks. They are massaging a response.

Tracy McTaggart, the city auditor, is asked Thursday if the probe reflects what she said a couple months ago when she talked about the city conducting business "consistent with an absence of rules" and pointed out "a need to get everybody playing by the same rules."

Back in February, the auditor thought this state of affairs was "very surprising" and "very unusual."

On Thursday, she says little but confirms much.

"Yes, we're seeing issues. I think the report bears out what I've been saying."

Insert wince of pain here.

Of course, we won't see the report until the brass at the city's Little Shop of Horrors turn over the paperwork back to the auditor May 6 and then she has to put their verbiage into the report and, on May 20, a committee of aldermen with two citizen members will chinwag over the conclusions.

The probe is one of a list of audits backlogged at the city where questions are being asked and the auditor's job is on the line.

Sometimes it sure looks like the city needs a strong-armed dentist more than a bean counter since the path to anything resembling the truth is like pulling the most stubborn of teeth.

"When you ask questions you end up chasing your tail around in circles," says Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart, who is consistently on the record fighting for the facts about the Calatrava footbridge.

While the report may not be too little it could well be too late.

"We need the answers. This happened nearly two years ago and we're still waiting," says the alderman also known as Big Red.

"My worry is, with only six weeks left before this council adjourns, what are we actually going to do about it?"

The answer is obvious. Mission accomplished. The bridge will start being put together in weeks and the ribbon will be cut by the fall election.

The matter will be relegated to the historians and the memoirs of a columnist.

In some sports this is called running out the clock.

Big Red is so unhappy she votes no to even accepting an update of the auditor's activities.

"I wanted to send a clear message," she says.

"I'm not at all pleased with what we're achieving. There's a lot at stake here and we're not getting things done in a timely manner."

Eric Sawyer, the city's boss bean counter, insists they do their very best to be helpful.

Ald. Ric McIver, fresh from announcing he's running for mayor, is on the attack.

He goes after what he calls the "protectionism" of those heading up city departments who won't "give information leading to budget reductions" and says such an attitude can lead to situations where "the taxpayers pay a higher price than they would otherwise pay."

He's questioned on whether he believes city staff are stonewalling city council.

"Stonewalling is a good word and protection of your turf is a good word."

Or a good four words.

He does not offer any examples of stonewalling nor does he say how any such stonewalling led to bigger budgets because, and this is McIver's first volley in the campaign, he can't give details because he doesn't know the details because the city brass are keeping the details to themselves. He also slams some of his colleagues, a hint of things to come.

"Sometimes members of council won't support reports where I've wanted to get information. The buck has to stop at council and council after Oct. 18 will be active in asking for more information."

It is quite a day. Bronco puts out his final annual report to Calgarians and he lists off a catalogue of achievements. It is a long list.

Funny. He never mentions the bridge.

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