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## Calgarians deserve answers

By **RICK BELL** - CALGARY SUN

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Let's see it.

Do Calgarians, as soon as possible, deserve to see the results of a probe on whether the awarding of the contract for the \$25-million designer bridge broke city rules and whether those rules even measure up to accepted standards?

Of course, the answer is yes.

And this is all Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart will try to get on the Thursday agenda of a meeting of aldermen who oversee city auditor Tracy McTaggart's digging for dirt.

Diane wants the auditor's report made public next month, before the Calatrava bridge construction begins and long before the council shuts down the gong show to hit the election trail.

After all, we just want the truth, inconvenient though it may be.

This much we know.

Some person or persons high up in authority approved this project without bids, without discussion and aldermen who asked questions behind closed doors were told to mind their own business and not interfere and not make a mountain out of a very chic molehill.

"As soon as the report is ready, it should be disclosed to everybody. We're under the gun and we should deal with the consequences of this audit as soon as we can. The report is pretty well ready to go and there is a lot of public interest. I want to see the report in March," says Diane.

The ideal situation would be for the public to see it the same time as the city's seatwarmers.

You see, as soon as the Bermuda Triangle of Bigwigs get their mitts on the report, you can expect the disappearing act to begin.

This is the crew that spent multimillions reorganizing city hall, didn't save a single cent and didn't feel the least bit red-faced.

This is the outfit that cut a deal so a judge wouldn't look into allegations of vote-rigging during a city election. The learned judge was far from amused. These are the folks who, when asked to offer up budget cuts, propose to chop what no one wants chopped so nothing of substance gets chopped.

This is the place where you retire and then get hired back as a consultant to do the stuff you did before you retired.

Going to city hall is like walking into a movie where there is not going to be a surprise ending and few, if any, twists in the plot.

It is a slow, dull, predictable hoodwinking of the public.

And it goes on and on, supported by aldermen who claim they're so progressive but back the same-old, same-old and, when they can't push through every one of their pipedreams, lecture Calgarians on their backwardness. Yikes.

When Diane is asked why she thinks the city brass and elected politicians pushed through the bridge, she gives an answer with an ouch.

"It wasn't viewed as extraordinary, it was viewed as standard operating procedure," she says.

Well, this morning is all about democracy, a word long absent from the municipal dictionary. But who are taxpayers but a cash cow whose role is to behave and be milked? Sadly, usually Calgarians oblige, though maybe the cow is ready to kick.

It will be most interesting to see how Ald. Brian Pincott reacts. He is in the high chair of this council's audit committee.

Pincott is a strong supporter of the Calatrava bridge, a man who likes the lighting possibilities the swanky design offers.

Will he be one of those who wants to sweep under the nearest carpet the auditor's investigation of the city's adventures in accounting?

Surely, the voters in Pincott's southwest ward want answers sooner rather than later, don't they?

There are also two citizen members on the committee who can put a thumb up or down. Have they been exposed to the doings downtown long enough so drinking the Kool-Aid doesn't trigger a gag reflex? One thing is certain. This story is not over.

"It won't go away because it shows how detached from reality some people down here are. It was about building something very opulent in a significant economic downturn and it's a symbol of arrogance. The attitude is they have the authority to do it so they'll go ahead and do it," explains Diane.

The city, detached from reality? Opulent? Arrogant?

Say it ain't so.

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