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## Cop cash saved

**But force asked to find efficiencies****By RENATO GANDIA, CALGARY SUN**

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Calgary police investigate a bank robbery at a TD Bank in Brentwood Mall in Calgary's N.W., as City Council again votes on whether to pre-approve the service's budget, Monday July 19, 2010. (Photo by DARREN MAKOWICHUK/Calgary Sun)

City council did an about face Monday, saving the Calgary Police Service from staff cuts this fall, but are asking the force to come up with other spending reductions.

In a 10-5 vote, Ald. John Mar and Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart talked their colleagues into taking a second look Monday night and consider a pre-approval of the police budget for next year.

After lengthy debate whether to even consider the motion, council approved it complete with two amendments, one affirming staff numbers and the other asking the force to find efficiencies.

City departments have been asked to slash their budgets for next year as it faces about \$60-million shortfall.

The Calgary Police Service was told to cut about 5%, which means it could lose 120 positions, but those positions have been saved.

Ald. Gord Lowe, chairman of finance committee, doesn't agree with pre-approval and said the new council has the right to examine every budget and decide in "the cold light of dawn" city expenditures for next year.

Ald. Brian Pincott, who was opposed to a reconsideration, said every budget should be looked at in November.

He said exempting the force from that process isn't doing service to the city or the police.

Pincott said some responses to council's July 5 decision were "pretty heavy-handed tactics" referring to potential cuts boots on the ground.

"It's kind of you're with us or against us attitude and this is not what it's all about," he said.

"It's about making the right decision."

Mar and Colley-Urquhart said in their motion "if current positions are eliminated and growth positions are not funded, all the accomplishments achieved to date with gains in crime reduction through deployment of 'boots on the streets' would be jeopardized."

The force already committed cash for various programs, and if council isn't going to reverse its decision, two classes of recruits with a total of 48 officers would remain cancelled.

Mayor Dave Bronconnier said during debate the Alberta's solicitor general told him the province is prepared to spend its share for keeping cops on Calgary's streets.

"I don't know how much stronger signal this council may require to recognize that the provincial government is prepared to make the commitment," he said.

"And why won't we reconsider and support without a doubt the No. 1 priority of any government: to keep its citizens safe."

Calgary Police Association president John Dooks said the debate was democracy in action.

"It was a very long discussion, I think it's a very open discussion," Dooks said.

"It's the right decision and I'm glad the council will support police and I think it will be a success for all."

The last time council deliberated the issue members didn't have sufficient information from the police commission on what the implications of cutting the force's budget, Dooks said.

"The concerns that we voiced a long time ago is not just the loss of financing from the city but the ripple effect it may have," said Dooks.

"Losing the 120 officers is one problem, losing another 100 above that in an era, in a time we need 300 more officers, we can't afford to lose more officers."

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