



January 2009 Newsletter

Alderman Diane Colley-Urquhart

Diane with Keith Hart, Kinsmen President supporting Kinsmen volunteers who replaced skating rink base boards and presented a cheque for \$1000 to the Millrise Community Association.

Budget 2009 – 2011

First I would like to thank all of you who contacted me and engaged in the budget debate. It is important for me, as an elected official, to hear from Calgarians and hear the impact this budget will have on people's daily lives.

I really appreciate your support, comments, suggestions, and advice. Your feedback gave considerable strength and credibility to my efforts.

On November 15 we held a very successful open house at City Hall with hundreds of Calgarians coming out. Over 900 signed my Taxpayer Petition which stated: "We the undersigned support a one year budget near the rate of inflation."

Many of those Calgarians who came out to voice their concerns were over the age of 55 (like me) who are very concerned about making ends meet and who have lost a considerable amount of money in their savings and investments with the downturn in the global economy. Calgarians are worried.

When we voted on the budget, and only four of us from the original eight voted against this budget, I felt very deflated. The excitement we had earlier in the process was gone. I voted against every attempt to add money and voted for every amendment to cut spending.

Disappointingly, the group of eight fell apart shortly after we began the budget debates on the Monday morning. As a result, we were unable to get the votes we needed to refer this bad budget back to administration and bring back a one year budget based on the rate of inflation.

With only four of us trying to refer the budget back, making amendments and being consistent – Aldermen Connelly, Chabot, McIver and myself continued to do what Calgarians asked of us.

After 24 hours, we had managed to cut only \$3.2 million and in order to cut the rate by 1% required a cut of \$8.3 million. This is why I wanted to see this budget sent back to Administration. They are the ones with the expertise to find the big dollars and because 15 Members of Council can never agree on what to cut.

It is unbelievable to spend over \$1.5 million on an exclusive health club when so many people have to cancel their own memberships because they can no longer afford them. The Art Program was \$175 million last year. The policy is 1% of the total capital budget, this needs to be cancelled.

Prudent leadership was required so we could fund what we *need* and not what we *want*. I also strongly believe we need to conduct an independent expert financial review to find efficiencies and savings.

Council needs to continue to do all we can to reduce the tax burden on Calgarians when your tax rate is finally set in April 2009. We also need to start working right away for how the budget will be brought back to us in November 2009.

Again, many many thanks to those Calgarians who spoke up and engaged themselves in this budget. I will continue to fight this budget and make cuts when and where I can.

The blue cart recycling service is here

Waste and Recycling Services will be implementing the city-wide blue cart recycling service in early 2009.

This service will include weekly collection and processing of recyclables for approximately 300,000 single family homes, up to and including fourplexes.

Beginning in March, you will receive your blue cart for recycling along with detailed instructions. Collection services will be phased in by quadrant with the southwest being the first in late April 2009.

Households receiving the blue carts will be charged approximately 26 cents a day (\$8 a month) and billing will start when collection service begins. Your blue cart collection day and placement will be the same as your garbage collection.

You will be able to recycle the following items in one bin and no need for sorting:

♻️ Plastics

♻️ Newspapers

♻️ Mixed papers

♻️ Magazines

♻️ Glass

♻️ Food cans

♻️ Milk containers

Update on EMS Transition to the Province

I would like to update you on the latest activities around the transition of EMS to the Province of Alberta. This transition is to take place by 2009 April 1.

With a few short months left until this transition occurs the City is entering in to a new phase involving detailed discussions with Alberta Health Services regarding the terms of transition.

The Province of Alberta has recently released the EMS Transition Business Plan. This plan sets the stage for the evolution of EMS Service delivery as it becomes a borderless, province-wide service.

The province has also tabled Bill 43 which would replace *The Ambulance Services Act* with the new *Emergency Health Service Act*. Through Bill 43, the province has established the legislative framework for the integration of EMS into the Alberta Health Care System.

The province has made the business plan available electronically at www.healthalberta.ca

As always, you can contact my office regarding this or any other civic matter at 268-1624, by email at dcolley@calgary.ca. Alternatively, you can contact '311.'