



**Deputy Mayor Diane Colley-Urquhart and Sponsors
of the Calgary Police Services' "Active Prevention Day"
January 2005**

March 2005 Newsletter

**Alderman
Diane Colley-Urquhart**

Major Shift in 2005 Budget

About a year ago, Council determined that we had a \$40 million dollar operating problem that obviously was not sustainable and could not be addressed through additional revenues only. It is also important to mention that municipalities are not permitted to run operating deficits and accumulate debt. Council directed administration to cut \$20 million dollars from their operations in Human Resources, Information Technology and Finance and Supply, and leave front-line service alone. Even though we reconciled the other \$20 million through additional user fees, our \$1.7 billion operating budget was still unsustainable.

In a historic move, Council directed that we move to multi-year budgeting instead of budgeting from year to year, in order to sustain our operations and service to citizens. Even with the actions we took, a tax increase was required to basically break even and not cut service, and balance off the rate of inflation which for many of the goods and services we require is higher than 2.5%.

We heard loud and clear from citizens at the standing policy committees and the Budget Open House at City Hall that we need to not only protect front-line service, but to increase it. For the 3.4% increase that you will pay (\$30 average on a \$225,000 home), our front-line services such as transit, roads, police, fire protections, parks maintenance, and bylaw enforcement will be beefed up:

- 69,500 additional hours of transit services
- 37 new police staff
- 46 more fire staff
- \$4.5 million for road paving and repair
- 15 more bylaw enforcement staff
- \$2 million in increased funds for parks maintenance
- A non-emergency City response centre
- 8 more staff and five additional vehicles for garbage collection
- \$500 thousand in increased funding for improvements to the library system

The top priority of the five-year capital budget is to catch up on our infrastructure, with 63% allocated for transportation and roads projects. These projects include:

- 3 major interchanges at Glenmore Trail / Elbow Dr./ 5 St. (GE5) – 36 St. / McKnight Blvd – Beddington Trail/Country Hills Blvd.
- 16 Ave. NW widening
- A Legacy Park at Clearwater, Bearspaw and Shepard
- Upgrades for street lighting, and construction and improvements to regional pathways.

If your home has an assessed value of \$225,000, the City's portion of your annual tax bill will be about \$930, up from \$900 last year. The City's share of your tax bill is about half of the total, with the other half going to the Province for school funding.

It is critical for us to keep taxes as low as possible for many reasons, which is why it is important that Calgary remain amongst the lowest municipal taxes in Canada. Of 24 cities recently surveyed, we are the lowest. By comparison, on a single detached home in Calgary, the tax bill would have been \$783 in 2004 compared to Montreal @ \$2,410, Vancouver @ \$1,545, Regina @ \$1,157 and Edmonton @ \$1,037.

The City's 2005 Budget is posted at www.calgary.ca, and I would value your feedback and input prior to Council giving final budget approval in the spring and setting the millrate (property tax) just prior to you receiving your tax bill in May.

As always, you can contact my office regarding this or any other civic matter at 268-1624, by email at dcolley@calgary.ca, or through my website, www.aldermandiane.ca. Alternatively, you can contact 268-CITY (2489).