



Deputy Mayor Diane Colley-Urquhart
Chairs May meeting of City Council

Summer 2006 Newsletter

Alderman
Diane Colley-Urquhart

SPIRALING TAXING & SPENDING MUST STOP!

On May 8, 2006 Council narrowly approved the spending of \$25.7 million made available to The City of Calgary when the Province of Alberta reduced the amount of education tax it collects from our city. Municipalities across Alberta have been collectively lobbying the Province for a number of years to reduce and ultimately remove the yearly provincial requisition for education. This year, the Province's 2006 requisition to The City was \$475.6 million, which was \$6.4 million higher than in 2005, however with the physical growth in Calgary's property assessment base, it meant an overall lower provincial property tax portion from 2005, leaving \$25.7 million for the City to use for municipal purposes. It is my view that this surplus be returned to Calgarians, or at the least, taxpayers should have been given an opportunity to provide feedback on how the municipality should spend it.

Concurrent with Council approving the 2006 Property Tax Bylaw, a Notice of Motion was brought forward to allocate this vacated tax room to public safety, housing and recreation initiatives. Despite my vigorous debate to allow the public to provide input into the disposition of these funds in a Standing Policy Committee forum where all policy matters are discussed, Council would not support this important opportunity to hear your views, and hastily approved this spending -- by one vote. Added to an already significant 4.4% residential tax increase for 2006, the bottom line for taxpayers is the equivalent of a 9.97% tax increase on the municipal portion of your tax bill from last year.

This opportunistic move is an arrogant disregard for taxpayers and Calgarians and reflects the attitude and sense of entitlement by municipal government decision-makers. This can only be viewed as another tax grab amid a long list of user fees, lot levies, borrowing and taxing decisions made over the past year. The cumulative impact of these additional burdens on Calgarians is significant and worrisome, preventing low-income Calgarians from becoming self-reliant, compromising our seniors on limited incomes, and hindering young families starting out. Spiraling costs negatively affect our economy and fuel inflation – a recipe for disaster for future generations. The tax and spend attitude at City Hall must stop!

Hundreds and hundreds of you contacted me by email and by phone, overwhelmingly supporting with my position on this. The following is a sampling of what you told me:

"Although I am not living in your ward, I want to say THANK YOU for your fight for tax payers."

"Dave Bronconnier seems to think that the more he spends the better mayor he is ... I disapprove of his continual requests for more money to spend on 'his priorities.'"

"Thank you for sticking to your principles and trying to put the refund on the education portion of the property tax back in the pockets of the people of Calgary."

"The mayor has used our education rebates from the Province twice now and on his "pet projects" instead of using them on education."

"Thank you for voting against it and than you even more for openly calling it what it is!!!"

"I really appreciate your stand against that out-of-control, construction-crazed Mayor Bronconcrete."

"Tax money not spent is not money for him to play with."

"City Council has a new theme song, 'Hands in my pockets, hands in my pockets, hands in my pockets!'"

"Thank you for fighting for our hard earned money. You will have my vote at the next election. Keep fighting!!!!"

"It is very unfortunate that we have only two members of Council who think we are overtaxed. The rest apparently have an insatiable appetite for tax payers money, lead by Mr. Big Spender himself, Dave Bronconnier."

"Thank you for advocating for us, and please continue to do so!"

As always, I appreciate and value your gon-going feedback and comments.

Feel free to 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 '311.'