

2018 Budget Response by Larry Heather-November 27th, 2017

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In considering the budget documents presented to us, I feel we are still living in an era of bygone bubble zones. Where the City Administration continues to live in a Municipal Price Index Island. An Island Shangri-La that separates it from the reality of the Consumer Price Index Mainland. Which the rest of the taxpaying public have been assigned to exclusionary zoning.

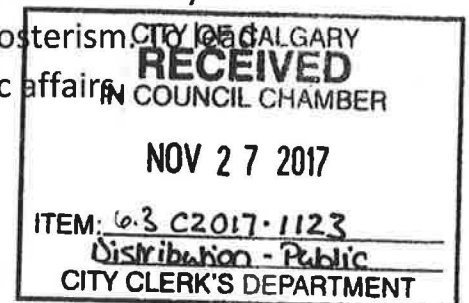
The onset of the deferred 2.9 tax increase of 2017 is masked, by much blatheration about a zero per cent increase in this coming year of 2018. Nor does it account for the raiding of the Reserve Funds to insulate us from cold realities of the recession of this past election year.

We shall wait with bated breath as to what essential un-necessaries, will be added to the list to satisfy special interest tribalism groups. Those who are demanding immediate attention. Talk of a mere cutback of 156 full-time positions, when some 30% of our core office space tax base remains empty, is the mere the removal of a mere 1/16th of the whip cream on the municipal pie.

What is needed is not some symbolic Inca-like Staff sacrifices, thrown in the maw of some fuming volcano as an appeasement to unseen forces. What is essential is a drastic reduction in City programs that are bloating the legitimate mandate of the Municipal orbit. There is no way the remaining businesses outside the Core, can take on the quotas of this deficit and survive in the harsh overfished municipal hinterland.

Continued speculation of the Greenline LRT, railroading into tax rooms that have long since been rezoned into crowded secondary suites by the Provincial government. This verges on the edge of financial astrology. It provokes me to rewrite the lyrics of the 70's "When the Room is in the Seventh House, and Jupiter aligns with Mars, then peace with guide our Plan-it transit, and Love will steer the Cars. This is the dawning of the Age of Nefarious."

In an era where the Federal and Provincials arenas seem utterly incapable of exercising Fiscal Prudence, it falls on the Municipal level to lead the way in restrained expenditures, and to eschew the ruts of Snollygosterism towards a brighter dawn of wise management of our public affairs.



It is apparent, that the plan of Mayoral Candidate Bill Smith was prescient, in that the funding model for an LRT that leads to two passenger dead ends is not workable. And we are warned in the media today by Brian Mason, that the advent season of the autonomous car, may well herald the past date due relevance of LRT itself. The era of Mass Personal Transit may be indeed dawning.

The use of the Enmax Dividend Stabilization Fund, begs the question of why the overcharging of Enmax Utilities, results in such dividends and Legacy Parks programs. Is there a better answer to the viability of Public Utilities?

It is questionable to provide an additional 4 million to Low Income Transit passes, when the funding model for transit financing is being trashed by one-time giveaways of a wastrel Provincial Government. For these monies to be turned over to a social service agency, who spends the entire grant within three months, provokes the question of a lowering of standards to qualify for such passes. Such as every member of a family being granted an unlimited transit pass. Not exactly a great way to answer the question, "Parents, do you know where your children are?"

The Centre City Parkade in Capital Costs has become a necessary due to short cuts taken on the building of Studio Bell, and the Central Library, whose viability is in question if proper car and truck access in all weather conditions is not made available.

As always, the costs of secondary suite application at \$2200 a pop, could be better managed if all applicants were required to submit a \$500 surety bond that would be refunded on the development of the project being completed.

This would reduce the urge to use this process for the mere practice of upzoning. This will also reduce the length of the Council Public Hearings. It is worthy of a try.

Thank you for your consideration of my viewpoints.

Larry Heather.

