

2010 - 3.89%

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1. Upcoming Meetings/Events

Apr. 26, 2011 SATA Monthly Meeting
May 8, 2011 BINGO 10:45 – 3:30

The guest speaker at the meeting will be Scott Henning, National Communications Director and Alberta Director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation.

SATA monthly meetings are held at 7:30 pm at the St. Albert Community League Hall, 17 Perron Street.

2. City Union Wages Go Up

Following on the heels of the recently announced pay increase for the City's non-union staff, on March 23rd the City announced a pay increase for its inside workers belonging to the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

The one year agreement will see CUPE workers receive a 1% increase retroactive to January 1, 2011, and a further 2.5% increase on July 1st. While this formula will lower the City's 2011 payroll cost, the 2012 budget will feel the full brunt of the 3.5% increase plus whatever additional increase is awarded to the City's CUPE workers.

To put this into perspective, consider the record of St. Albert wage increases for the Canadian Union of Public Employees over the last 5 years:

2006 - 3.65%
2007 - 3.5%
2008 - 4.54%
2009 - 4.5%

Combined with the latest increase of 3.5%, over the past 6 years, pay levels for CUPE workers will have increased by over 26%. This, during a recession which is just now abating. In contrast, the consumer price index, including a projected 2.1% increase for 2011, rose by 12.8%.

Based on recent studies¹ there is a high disparity between private and public sector payroll costs. With salary and benefit costs accounting for roughly 43% of the City's annual budget, Council had an opportunity to start to rein in an out-of-control compensation system, and chose to do the opposite. Under the circumstances, Council and Administration should not be surprised when taxpayers demand more private contractors be hired to provide municipal services.

3. Waste Rates Increase

Over the past few months we have seen many letters to the editor, critical of the Administration, calling the new waste collection system unfair. Clearly, implementation of the new solid waste and organic collection program is not consistent with the City's pay-as-you-throw philosophy.

In an effort to make the system somewhat more equitable, especially for residents that generate small quantities of waste, on April 4th Councillor Heron brought forward a motion that the new solid waste rates be structured to provide residents a greater incentive to reduce waste volumes.

Unfortunately, the plan does not go far enough! The same pay-as-you-throw principle should be applied to the collection of organic waste and recyclables! The following table summarizes the increase in the total cost of solid waste collection since 2008.

Subscription Level	2008	2011	Increase
½ Bag / wk	\$5.55	\$17.79	221%
1 Bag / wk	\$7.45	\$21.09	183%
2 Bag / wk	\$11.25	\$25.69	128%

Since 2008 new fees were introduced with the introduction of the blue bag program (2009), and recycling of organics (2011). However, by having gone from a variable rate structure to a largely fixed rate structure, residents are facing large increases in their cost of waste disposal.

In only 3 years, St. Albert has gone from a rate structure that encouraged waste reduction, to one where those residents who throw out very little solid waste can now look forward to seeing their solid waste rates increase by 221%. On the other hand those residents that produce large volumes of waste will see their rates increase 128%. Where is the logic in the new rate structure? Wouldn't it make more sense that those households that generate large quantities of waste should pay proportionately more than those that produce little or no waste? After all, isn't this all about being green and reducing waste?

We think that City Council should go back to the drawing board on this one!

Something else that would help keep costs down is if the City reconsidered its plan of year round pick-up of organics. The volumes of organic waste will drop off dramatically during the winter months, and taxpayers could use a break on their utility bills.

4. Ray Gibbon Drive Costs

Ray Gibbon Drive has been in the news recently. First, the dream of Ray Gibbon Drive someday becoming a provincial multi-lane highway was kept alive by Council on Feb. 28th when \$17 million was authorized for the purchase of land needed for Phase 3. Apparently the \$14.4 million of the \$19.5 million owed by the Province for extra land for Phases 1 and 2 was reimbursed to St. Albert contingent on the City purchasing the land needed for Phase 3! So instead of allowing the City to pay down debt, the Province gave St. Albert \$14.4 million so the City could spend another \$17 million to meet future land needs for the project.

On the bright side, this month the Province came through with an additional \$4 million payment; presumably to take care of the additional funds needed to proceed with the land purchase.

However more palatable that may appear the City was denied the opportunity to invest the proceeds repaid by the Province, or pay down municipal debt. And according to the Administration, the Province doesn't reimburse interest costs! With no firm commitments or plans by the Province to repay the outstanding amounts owing to St. Albert, the cost to residents could be millions!

It was reported that the Province will reimburse the City for Stage 3 only after it is built, and the Province has funds available. Council must refuse to proceed with Phase 3 of RGD until the province has paid the funds still owed to the City for Phase 1 and 2, and has advanced the provincial share of the funding needed to complete Phase 3.

5. What's Next At Council?

Watch for the Implementation plan for the Downtown Area Re-development Plan, which will include preliminary DARP project costs. See it at Council as part of the 10 Year Capital Plan review by the Standing Committee of Finance on May 9, 2011 and at Council on May 24th.

6. Bingos... HELP

Bingo volunteers needed! Rally around the St. Albert Community League, and help make SACL Bingos successful!

Seven (7) volunteers are required for early games (10:45- 3:30) and 8 for the evening events (4:45- 9:30). The 2011 bingo dates are shown below. All Bingos are held at the Bingo Hall in Grandin Mall.

Weekday	Date	Time
Sunday	May 8, 2011	10:45-3:30
Sunday	October 2, 2011	10:45-3:30
Saturday	December 10, 2011	4:45-9:30

We are in urgent need of volunteers for the upcoming May 8th Bingo. If you can help, call George at 780-691-1459.

¹ Alberta Municipal Spending Watch, Trends in Fiscal Sustainability, 2000-2008, Matthew Enns, Canadian Federation of Independent Business