
Grumpy Taxpayer\$ of Greater Victoria

'Almost' The Best Place on Earth | grumpytaxpayers.com | Dec. 2016



Saanich councillor's pay adds up

Revenue Canada tax free expense allowance gives boost

This is the second in an occasional series of profiles on the remuneration - often not readily transparent to the taxpayer - our local politicians receive for their efforts.

Though these jobs are considered by many as part-time and a public service role, particularly in the District of Saanich and its population of about 115,000, others argue the demands of the system within which politicians work is increasingly demanding.

Susan Brice, 72ish, was an elementary school teacher, talk show host with CFAX Radio, executive director of the Better Business Bureau Vancouver Island and a director with Silver Threads.

Arguably, Coun. Brice is one of the most active and powerful politicians in the region with responsibilities spanning Saanich, the Capital Regional District, Capital Regional Hospital District Board, Victoria Regional Transit Commission, and because of her eligibility for provincial order-in-council appointments, BC Transit.

Note, the expense allowance from Saanich and a third of the CRD pay is considered non-taxable by Revenue Canada despite both jurisdictions already reimbursing expenses. Councillors are also eligible to participate in certain benefit plans (BC medical, dental, extended health), the value depends on which benefits are selected by individual councillors.

In sum, Coun. Brice is paid \$39,492 in 2016, a third of which is a tax-free expense allowance, by the District of Saanich, (along with reimbursement for \$2,398 in expenses for meetings, courses and conferences). Plus, she's paid \$17,000 from the CRD and \$11,950 from BC Transit and the Victoria Regional Transit Commission. So, a grand total, factoring in the CRD and Saanich tax-free allowance treatment and the CRD meeting per diems, estimated at \$75-80,000. [CLICK FOR MORE STORY >>](#)

City of Victoria mobile app 'almost' connects

Kudos to the City of Victoria for launching its new mobile app developed at a cost of \$20,000 with local startup FreshWorks Studio. The app allows residents to do everything from report potholes to apply for jobs, take a photo, pinpoint the location of a service problem on a map, and submit a call for service.

What's missing though is a tracking system to log service public requests and City responses - this writer has had several experiences where a suggestion was left unacknowledged, ignored or not dealt with. With a tracking system across all City departments, correspondence would be less likely to fall through the cracks and on deaf ears. Mayor Lisa Helps told Grumpy\$ that such as system-wide capability is now being developed.

The new ConnectVictoria can be downloaded on the IOS and Android platforms at iTunes or Google Play app stores.

Grumpy Taxpayer\$ theme song >>



Double double, toil and trouble?

MUNICIPAL MATTERS

The Mayor of Esquimalt **Barb Desjardins**, chair of the CRD, and South Gulf Island Electoral district director **David Howe**, vice-chair, were re-elected to one-year terms. Desjardins defeated Oak Bay Mayor Nils Jensen by board vote. Howe, declined to sit in a secondary role as chair of the Capital Regional District Hospital Board. As a result, Victoria Coun.

Marianne Alto defeated Nils Jensen to fill that

position....**The CRD-owned 60,000-square-foot space at 836 Viewfield Rd.** has been leased to a film and TV production studio for an undisclosed amount. It's good news for the CRD which came under fire from taxpayers for buying the pricey property prematurely prior to approvals for sewer treatment facilities. Proponents for the project say several hundred jobs might result from the warehouse rental to Pretty Clever Entertainment...

Report finds BC municipal spending unsustainable

The 9th annual report on municipal spending by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business shows 97% of B.C.'s municipal governments have increased their operating spending at an unsustainable pace since 2004.

BC's major centres, Vancouver and Victoria, both increased their operating spending by 23 per cent from 2004 - 2014 after adjusting for inflation and population growth. As for Saanich, a staggering 46 per cent.

The report found only **5 out of the 152 municipalities examined in BC kept operating spending in line with inflation and population growth over the past decade.** None of the 20 largest municipalities made the list. [CFIB REPORT >>](#)

Scary witch costs at City of Victoria

In our eternal quest to watchdog municipal costs, Grumpy\$ requested information about a witch and we got the answers.

"The cost of the witch erected on top of City Hall during Halloween: The cost of buying the actual witch **(\$2,000)** and associated erection materials **(\$184.72)**, and labour costs for erecting and taking it down **(\$600)**. Total cost for the witch **\$2,784.72.**

The 'witch' decision was made by the Director of Community Engagement and Strategic Planning as part of a larger initiative to bring people downtown by enhancing their experience with creative, fun and entertaining promotions. The Wiccan community was not consulted or the feelings of other religious groups that might view the witch as objectionable.

PS If a Santa theme is being considered for Christmas by the City of Victoria, **may be suggest an inflatable of his elf 'Grumpy'** ? We could even find a work party and a token donation around here to put it up and pay for the promotion.

[WICKED WICCAN IN VICTORIA >](#)

WHAT'S COMING UP

OPEN BOARD MEETING

Join us **Tuesday, Dec. 6 from 12 to 2 pm** for lunch and meeting at location TBA. Partners and interested supporters are welcome to sit in, send a note to

grumpytaxpayers@telus.net....We operate by way of our good looks and donations. which have ranged from \$25 to \$450. To make it easier for our supporters we've added a PayPal button at the bottom of this page that accepts all major credit cards, or you may mail it to the address at the bottom of this page. Thank you for your generous support....

The best of the season,
The Grumpy Taxpayer\$ Team



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A non-profit, unaffiliated, non-partisan, citizen's advocacy group dedicated to lower taxes, less waste and more accountable municipal government.



Join us to inspire better local government in Victoria.

Grumpy Taxpayers of Greater Victoria, 1606-751 Fairfield Rd., Victoria, B.C. V8W 4A4 Canada

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