

Region coughs up for transfer tax windfall Provincial revenue set to increase 30% by March 2017

What was tabled at the legislature recently was clearly a provincial budget, it has enough numbers to drive you squirrely. Most of the talk on the street though was about affordable housing issues and how to spend the massive windfall from the property transfer tax accumulated last year.

The Victoria region accounted for nearly \$58-million of the government's \$1.15-billion from B.C.'s property transfer tax in the year ending March 31, 2015.

In a province obsessed by house prices, critics charge that the property transfer tax helps to balance the budget at the expense of increasing the cost of housing.

The tax was collected from 10,420 transactions in the fiscal year ending March 31, 2015. The three main sources of revenues were from City of Victoria (\$15.4-million), District of Saanich (\$12.5-million), and District of Langford (\$5.6-million).

The information was revealed in a freedom of information request from a taxpayer posted in the B.C. government's open information website www.openinfo.gov.bc.ca

The tax haul provincially is **expected to grow to \$1.49-billion by Mar. 31, 2016**. Then the province forecasts the windfall will cool down - because of legislative changes and a slowing real estate market - by 16.8 per cent in 2016-17.

Property Transfer Tax - Apr. 1, 2014 to Mar. 31, 2015

City of Victoria (2,396) \$15,415,700

District Central Saanich (451) \$2,934,980

District of Esquimalt (384) \$1,760,860

District of Saanich (2,281) \$12,529,400

District of Langford (1,176) \$5,641,240

District of North Saanich (402) \$3,341,270

District of Metchosin (93) \$485,980

District of Sooke (471) \$1,598,440

District of Highlands (42) \$374,204

Town of View Royal (259) \$1,536,680

Town of Sidney (587) \$2,479,590

Victoria Rural (188) \$823,549

Gulf Islands Rural (31) \$144,840

Gulf Islands Rural-2 (954) \$3,683,100

Totals for Capital Regional District (10,420) \$57,798,523

* Number of Transactions in parentheses.

CRD DOUBLE PAY FORMULA ON THE BURNER

The CRD released its remuneration and travel expense policy at its Feb. 10 board meeting, but still plans to develop a formula to address pay for director absences. Until its resolved taxpayers will continue to pay twice to fill a single seat at a CRD committee or board meeting.

The issue arose because a director is paid a fixed stipend per year, which includes attending up to two standing committees and, when missing a meeting, it results in an alternate replacement being paid to attend in his or her absence. The issue arose in 2014 and 2015 because of chronic absences of some board members and alternates doing the job.

BACKGROUND: [CRD Remuneration and Expense Policy](#)

A SUCCESS STORY

Kudos to the Capital Regional District for accepting many of the ideas proposed by Grumpy Taxpayer\$ on ways to improve its website and communications. **Out of 15 ideas, seven recommendations were accepted and four others are under consideration.** The upgrades include such things as adding links to the directors page, adding clarity to the voting structure at the CRD, adding board and committee hyperlinks, a more prominent FOI link, and a regular 'Get Involved' feature to encourage public engagement. Under consideration is a public e-letter, improvements to type size and a language option, and

importantly, a tracking system for board and committee motions to ensure they are dealt with.

So is it worthwhile deferring your property tax payments ?

- Jack Knox, Times Colonist

Barb Desjardins, CRD Chair

SHAKEUP IN SOOKE

Terea Sullivan has been appointed the new CAO for the District of Sooke Dec. 14, 2015 and its 11,000 residents. She replaces **Gordon Howie** who completed a three-year contract. Since then three key managers have departed in a matter of weeks: corporate officer **Bonnie Sprinkling**, finance director **Michael Dillabaugh** and engineer **Elisabeth Nelson**. New appointments include **Tina Hansen**, acting corporate officer, and **Brent Blackwell**, director of finance....**Dermod Travis of Integrity BC** reports there are 2,502 lobbyists in BC compared to 3,008 in Ottawa. He suggests a province-wide registry for municipal lobbyists similar to that for provincial lobbyists...

MUNICIPAL MATTERS

A tip of the hat to **Saanich Finance Dept.** which received for the ninth consecutive year an award from the **Canadian Award for Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA)** for its 2014 financial statements. The GFOA is a major professional association, servicing the needs of more than 18,000 appointed and elected local, state and provincial level government officials and other finance practitioners.....After an initial ask for 2.75 per cent, **Sidney Town Council** has adopted a Financial Plan for 2016-2020 that will result in a **municipal tax increase of 0.81% for 2016. There are also no changes to utility rates for this year.** Bravo Sidney !

WHAT'S COMING UP

OPEN BOARD MEETING - 50-% GOAL REACHED - Donations have ranged from \$25 to \$450. With your help Grumpy\$ has now **reached the 50% mark** of our start-up goal of \$5,000. 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. Thank you for your generous support. Join us **Tuesday, Mar. 15 from 12 to 2 pm** for lunch and meeting at location TBA. Sponsors and supporters are welcome to sit in, but please RSVP to grumpytaxpayers@telus.net ...

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Sincerely,

The Grumpy Taxpayer\$ Team

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