
Integrity in Local Government, a Two-way Street !

Please join us for the **Annual General Meeting & Guest Speaker Dermod Travis of Integrity BC on 'Integrity in Local Government, a Two-way Street.'** Date: **Wednesday, Nov. 9** at 7 pm, Community Room, Greater Victoria Public Library, Downtown Central Branch, [Members and Public Invited >>](#)

Grumpy Taxpayer\$ of Greater Victoria

'Almost' The Best Place on Earth grumpytaxpayers.com Oct. 2016



Zilch. Nada. Nothing.

Unresolved issues of wasteful spending, excessive wages, and duplication of services in Victoria regional municipalities

Zero.

That's the amount of tax increases local politicians should be aiming for this fall as they sit down to hammer out the 2017 budgets.

Something is wrong when the **Canadian Consumer Tax Index 2016**, developed by the Fraser Institute, finds that the average Canadian family spends more on taxes than housing, food and clothing combined with 42 per cent of income going to taxes, and 38 per cent being spent on the basic necessities of life. [READ REPORT >>](#)

With regional and individual debt escalating rapidly, consider these arguments supporting a call for budgetary restraint:

Nothing enrages the public more than wasteful spending (and small items result in the most fury). Here are a few recent examples suggesting local councils are already getting too much in taxes.

City of Victoria spent \$10,000 on a musical parkade staircase - the last time we looked it doesn't even work - and thousands more on a scruffy puzzle motif on a crosswalk. North Saanich councillors never bothered telling the public, but they found \$28,600 to voluntarily gift to the chief administrative officer because of the misbehavior of the previous council. In Saanich, a staff proposal to spend \$30,000 to assess a mini goat project (there are two families with goats) was mercifully nixed by council. Unfortunately a decision to spend about \$1-million on a new fire truck with ladder went ahead, rather than reaching an agreement with Victoria to share their equipment.

Excessive wages well-above the general public angers the taxpayer.

A recent budget study by Ernst and Young found that between 2001 and 2012, municipalities granted salary increases twice as high as the provincial government and 65 per cent ahead of inflation.

That trend hasn't changed locally during the last four years. Starting wage for a road maintenance worker at the City of Victoria is now \$28.05 an hour plus benefits costed at another 10-15 per cent. Wages in excess of \$100,000 annually are common in municipalities. Last year in Sooke for example, the deputy fire chief made \$148,768 and assistant fire chief earned \$149,613, excluding benefits.

Local taxpayers are worried about the cost of everything else rising well-above inflation.

Water and sewer bills are already going up \$245 annually on average for residents of seven core municipalities to pay for the \$765-million sewer treatment project. Any cost overruns will be the sole responsibility of the local taxpayer. When there is a new bridge, City of Victoria taxpayers will take another major financial hit. Not to be outdone, provincial utilities and services are escalating beyond inflation. Three examples: After a 5.5 per cent increase last year, ICBC is asking for 4.9 per cent this year. This year and last BC Hydro rates increased four per cent annually, also well-above inflation. Natural gas rates at Fortis BC will increase average bills by 12 per cent starting Oct. 1. Major changes to Medical Services Premiums will see an estimated 540,000 BC taxpayers paying higher fees.

Lastly, the costly duplication of services continues to infuriate the ratepayer.

Do we need 13 councils, when maybe three or five would work just as well? Why are there 13 payroll, human-resource and accounting departments across the region? Do we really need 10 communications staff at the CRD when many of the municipalities fulfill the same function?

Aside from improved regional governance, it's time for zero-based budgeting process in each municipality where all expenses must be justified for each new

year, starting from a 'zero base' and every function within its organization analyzed for needs and costs. Zero-based budgeting will help identify areas of wasteful expenditure and suggest alternate courses of action.

Excessive spending patterns over too many years left unchecked may result in the need 'for a complete change in culture' as evidenced by the recent firings of 25 managers and key staff in Brampton.

Zero.

BACKGROUND:

[Top 10 ways to improve capital region governance](#)

[Capital Region Debt Clock](#)

[City of Brampton sacks 25 managers, key staff, Toronto Star, Sept. 6, 2016](#)

**Ta-Da ! Grumpy Taxpayer\$ now
has a theme song >>**



MUNICIPAL MATTERS

Taxpayers are asking questions about **Saanich spending a mind-boggling \$224,000** to upgrade its website Saanich.ca....**Saanich is also planning to webcast** council meetings starting in early 2017, advises CAO Paul Thorkeleson. Unlike the system used by the CRD, the Saanich viewing will have multiple cameras so you can see faces and

not just hear audio....Major changes to **Medical Service Premiums will bring in an additional \$124-million for the government**, some of it attributed to population growth. Poor families will pay less, but middle income earners making more than \$42,000 will pay more...

AVERAGE FAMILY PAYS \$34,154 IN TAXES

The average Canadian family paid \$34,154 in taxes of all sorts last year, says the Fraser Institute, a Vancouver-based think-tank. The estimate includes hidden business taxes that are passed along in the price of goods and services purchased. **The fourth largest category of taxes were property taxes at \$3,832.** The study concludes that visible and hidden taxes amount to 42.4 per cent of the income of the average Canadian family, estimated at \$80,593. This compares to 37.6 per cent of the family's total cash income spent on housing, food and clothing - all necessities of life. **More at www.fraserinstitute.org**

WHAT'S COMING UP

AGM AND GUEST SPEAKER WEDNESDAY, Nov. 9 @ 7pm

Dermod Travis, executive director of Integrity BC and a well-known Times-Colonist columnist, will highlight the first annual general meeting as guest speaker during the evening of Wednesday, Nov. 8. Formed in 2011, Victoria-based Integrity BC is a non-partisan, non-profit organization dedicated to help restore a bond built on trust and confidence between citizens and their elected officials. It has revealed White House salaries dwarfed by BC

city managers, exposed junkets charged to the taxpayers' tab, helped protect British Columbians from election gag laws, launched the 'Take back BC' campaign, and uncovered prohibited political donations. [MORE>>](#)

NOTICE ELECTION OF OFFICERS

With the annual meeting Nov. 9, you may want to consider putting your name forward for our board of directors. Meetings out held monthly for a couple of hours - your efforts will be rewarding. It's a working board - not ceremonial - so you will need to join in the fun.

It's a new year - consider renewing your donation today.

Sincerely,
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.



**Consider running for Grumpy\$
board of diectors?**

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