

YOUR VIEWS

Outsourcing strategic planning is a waste of city money

What a cautionary action! What another unbelievable and outrageous waste of money and talent!

St Albert City Council is paying \$25,000 plus of taxpayers' dollars to outsource the strategic planning priorities sessions. Mayor Cathy Heron justifies this stating "city staff will bring their own plans (gasp! oh no!) ... and their priorities are different from ours because they do not listen to the people like we do." Therefore, three incumbent formerly all part-time and four brand new part-time council members apparently are supposedly better informed to set these important city priorities.

Without the annoying interference and informed ideas of the city staff, will the priorities really reflect St. Albert citizens or just the personal priorities of certain council members?

St. Albert city administrators are full-time and reportedly very well paid in the market to attract and retain the best people. Their full-time work is

to understand and manage our city. Plus, I am sure they, and their many assistants, indeed do get an earful of positive and negative suggestions from citizens as that is their job.

This move shows an appalling and demoralizing lack of trust and value in staff's qualifications, ongoing responsibilities, talents, work, expertise, professionalism, experienced opinions, and capabilities. Will this same disclaimed staff be really eagerly committed to implementing the new priorities, or remaining in St. Albert? Will there have to be additional external staff hired to oversee their work to ensure plans are done council's way?

Some council members have already questioned the validity of the plebiscite results by the electors who cared enough to cast their ballot, and now they are questioning their administration's abilities. Really? These are definite warning signs in these actions.

**Judy Loutit,
St. Albert**

Reduce waste generation at the source

I am hopeful that Terry and Lesley Gierulski are beginning to understand how complex waste management is with their complaint about the "complicated" St. Albert waste collection system (Letter to the Editor, *Gazette*, Nov. 25). However, this is just the tip of the iceberg.

One of the strategies of modern waste management is to pass on some of these complexities to the waste gener-

ators (including Terry and Lesley) with the expectation that knowledge of the complexities may influence decision making, and reduce waste generation at the source. They can probably handle "complicated" waste collection, and strive with the rest of world to reduce and better manage the waste we generate.

**Ken Johnson,
St. Albert**

Program reinforces the importance of inclusion

Leo Nickerson Elementary School and Plugged In Community Centre Organization hosted Shelley Moore's presentation "Meaningful Inclusion in Classrooms, Schools and Communities" on Monday, Nov. 27. Local businesses generously supported this sold out event, with 250 attendees from St. Albert and surrounding communities, some coming from as far as Red Deer

and Calgary.

Shelley's entertaining presentation reinforced how powerful proper inclusion has for all members of a community, and St. Albert was fortunate to have Shelley share ways to integrate philosophies and practices of inclusion.

**Kristi Rouse,
St. Albert**

Telling it like it is

I applaud wholeheartedly the view by A.I. Smith (*Gazette*, Dec. 2). Councillor Sheena Hughes is a superb watchdog on council. While Hughes was on the previous council, I had the opportunity to witness her dedication to taxpayers' concerns. She was the only one on the ball and I did not have to continue making requests. She attended to the matter immediately, and I just wish that she had run for mayor. Speaking of the new Mayor Cathy Heron, knowing that she was the protege of Mayor Crouse, it is no wonder that she will lead as per his style.

Valerie Spink's (*Gazette*, Nov. 18) outrageous attack on Councillor Hughes was demeaning. Thankfully Sheena Hughes is not afraid to stand out and stand up for what is right. She fought the status quo constantly while on the previous council but at least then she had one or two allies who weren't afraid to not be allowed to play in the mayor's sandbox. Now she is alone but not afraid to let the

current mayor and other councillors know that she will continue to fight for what is right and not to chalk up brownie points. Kudos to you, Sheena. You have my respect because you are willing to go against the grain for us, the taxpayers. You have demonstrated that you know the meaning of "No" and unfortunately you have to defend these issues that should be a no-brainer.

I knew that this issue of the branch library would be a nightmare for us if Cathy Heron got in because she was a donor to the library cause and she is not about to respect the voters adamant "No" vote if she can push her way through.

No means no in every aspect and issues facing people today. Women are standing up to unwanted gestures and becoming vocal about it. We as taxpayers in St. Albert need to stand up to the mayor and council and become vocal in enforcing that our will will be done. Not hers.

Colleen Chupka, St. Albert

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 Stand with those who risk exclusion from any aspect of our community life; at work, play or in our neighbourhoods.

To learn more visit stalbert.ca and search **Diversity and Inclusion**