

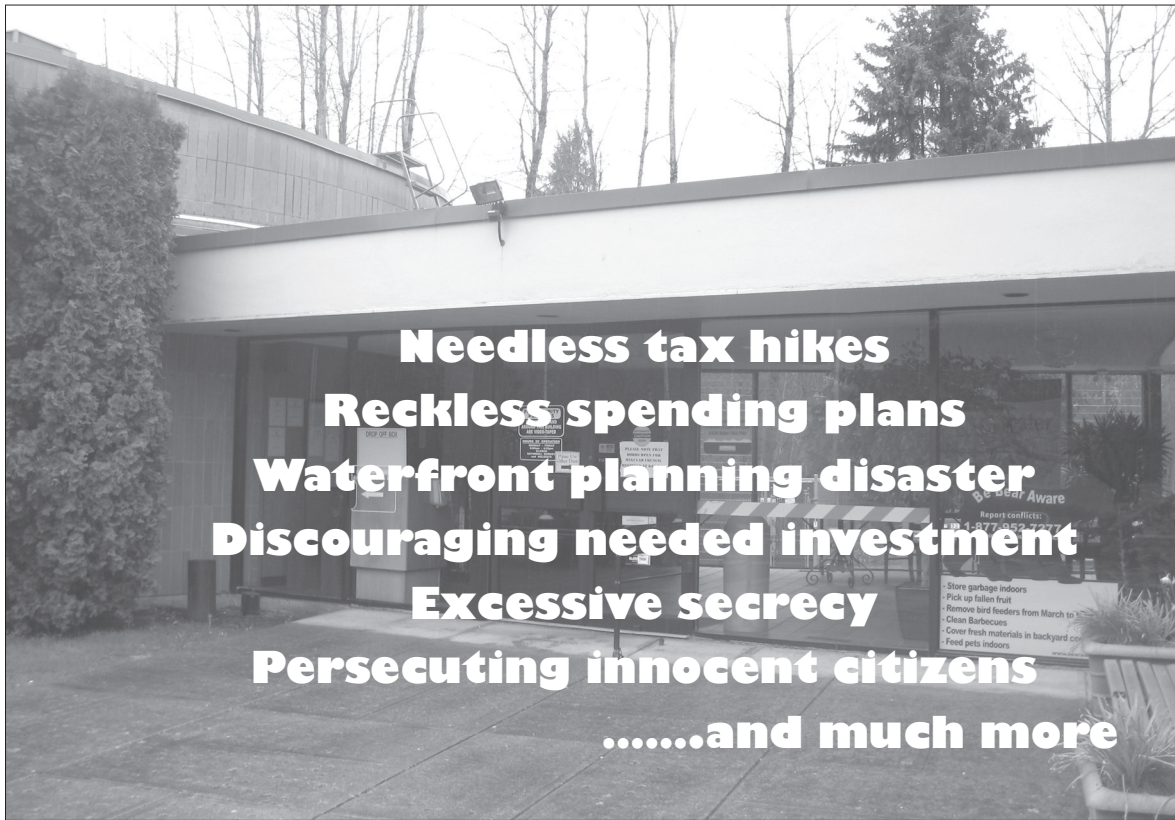
Mission Messenger

Page 1

ISSUE 1

APRIL 2011

Mission, We have a problem!



Inside this issue

Can we afford the Plans ?

P.2

The PSIT Debacle

P.2

The Expensive Wish List

P.3

Missed Opportunity

P.3

City Square Folly

P.4

Mission not Accomplished

P.4

Why the Secrecy?

P.4

Who are we?

P.4

Fire Problems

P.4

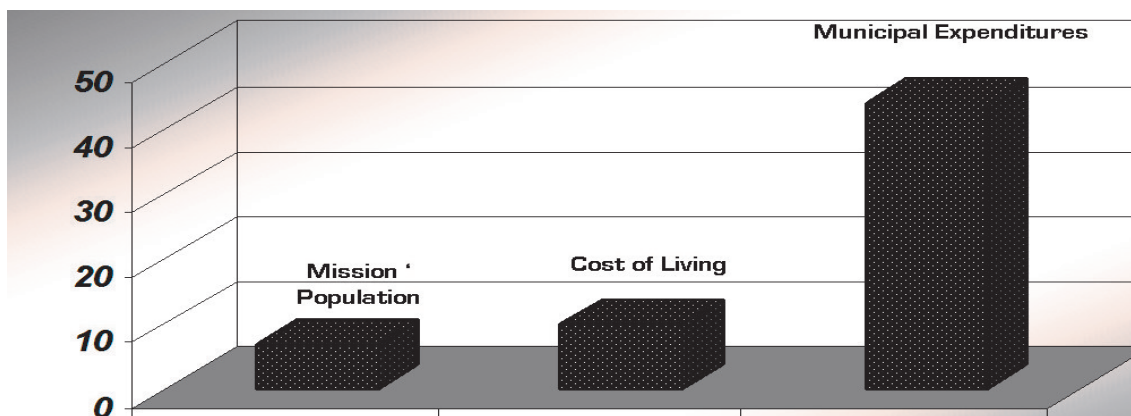
The Truth about the Tax Increase

It's 5.3% not 3.0% !

Council is quoting the planned 2011 tax increase as 3.0%. This is not true. They have neglected to include water, sewer and refuse costs. Including these costs (as has always been done in the past and is done

by other municipalities) the average home in Mission will face a 5.3% increase.

Increases in expenditures since 2005 have far exceeded population growth or the cost of living.



Percentage Increases since 2005

The Way Forward

We know we have problems. We need solutions.

In future issues we will continue to highlight the problems and begin to offer commonsense, affordable solutions.

We'd like you to join us in being part of the solution.

Visit our forum at:

www.mission.freeforums.org

There you will find more material on issues and have the opportunity to express your views on these important issues and the future of Mission.

Dream the Impossible Dream ! But make sure dreams are affordable

Councils do have to plan ahead.

However, the plans do have to be realistic and affordable. There is a huge difference between what we need, what we want and what we can afford.

Council's capital plan shown here is ambitious but the expenditures are huge. It is important to remember that this plan does not include essential capital items related to roads, water, sewer etc. Additionally, no estimates have been made of the significant running costs of many of these facilities.

Desirable as many of these facilities are, Council needs to examine the list and costs closely in terms of what we can afford and alternatives available. For instance, there is ample land to expand the existing City Hall, rather than spend \$19 million on a new building.

Throwing together a wish list without critical examination is irresponsible.

\$128 million is a lot of money—and that assumes no cost overruns like the existing Leisure Centre.

New Leisure Centre	\$30,000,000
New Police Building	\$19,000,000
Municipal Hall	\$17,675,000
Pool Addition	\$15,000,000
Expansion of Public Works Building	\$8,000,000
Dike Trails	\$7,650,000
New Sports Park Phase 1	\$4,800,000
New Sports Park Phase 3	\$4,000,000
Arts Centre	\$2,975,000
Senior Centre	\$2,975,000
Youth Centre	\$2,975,000
Upgrade of Sports Park	\$2,800,000
New Sports Park Phase 2	\$2,722,000
New Park Amenities	\$2,145,000
Museum Space	\$1,700,000
Multi-Purpose Space	\$1,700,000
Transit Exchange	\$1,200,000
District Trails	\$900,600
Community Announcement Board	\$120,000
Skateboard Park	\$71,500
Total	\$128,409,100

The PSIT/GrowOp Fiasco

Democracy is a fragile flower. Just how fragile is shown by the District of Mission's own figures in relation to the PSIT/Grow-Op Bylaw.

In 2010, 228 house inspections were carried out. 46 of those were carried out at the request of the RCMP when they had previously found Grow-Ops.

Even the most virulent opponents of the Bylaw have no problem with this.

But 115 of the 182 inspections initiated by the District were, by the District Inspectors' own admission, of totally innocent households. Nevertheless those homeowners were subject to an involuntary search by three Inspectors with a highly visible police presence. In some cases drawers and suitcases were searched. The embarrassment, humiliation and invasion of privacy are obvious. Less obvious was the fact that if those innocent persons ever required a Criminal Record Check such a check would show that there had been "negative contact" with the Police.

In none of the remaining 67 were grow-ops found, nor was a single criminal charge laid. Yet they were each charged at least \$5,200 for having a grow-op, based solely on the opinion of the District Inspectors that there had previously been a grow-op. This was based on such flimsy evidence as bags of potting soil being found in the basement. It is easy to imagine the outcry if the RCMP had served 182 search warrants and 115 found nothing or if citizens

were convicted simply because in a single police officer's opinion they were guilty even though there was no evidence.

However the District of Mission does not have to prove its case to a judge or a court of law. It is judge, jury, executioner and recipient of the outrageous fees.

Mission Council, with the single honourable exception of Councillor Stevens, appears to be totally unmoved by this abuse of power. Clearly this process is undemocratic and unethical.

Worse, two Class Action Lawsuits are about to be filed against the District. The potential legal liability is immense and it is not certain the District has sufficient liquid reserves to fund the liabilities.

In a last minute act of contrition, Mission Council has ordered a review. Unbelievably that review is being conducted by one of the original inspectors!

Not a single grow-op has been found.

Not a single criminal charge has been laid.

But hundreds have suffered humiliation and financial loss.

Waterfront \$200,000 spent on Studies

No practical Plan but a lot of very bad (and expensive) ideas

After the 2008 election Mayor Atebe declared success on the waterfront. He said: *"I promised (before 2005 election) to redesign the town's waterfront, and before the elections (in 2008), a plan was already in the implementation stages."*

The sad truth is that there was no plan then and there is no plan now.

Implementation is nothing more than a dream.

Instead of serious planning for tax paying, job producing development there is instead a vague wish list for pie-in-the sky Municipal developments.

This ignores the fact that we cannot afford these projects on the waterfront.

Much of the land has been seriously polluted over the years and remediation costs would be massive. Addi-

tionally, this land would be subject to liquefaction in the event of an earthquake. Therefore extensive foundation work would be needed, which would almost certainly double the costs of construction of buildings that would produce zero tax income.

It is true that the dikes in that area are being strengthened but water flows downhill and a breach in dikes upstream (as happened in 1948) would make City Hall and the Police Building inaccessible at the time they would be most needed.

Council's Wish List

Multi-purpose Space

Library/Museum/Archive

Police Building

Events Centre

Performance and Exhibition Centre

City Hall

and

A big box store like Walmart or Target but knock it down after 25 years and build houses

The most impractical idea of all was to attract a large big box store like Walmart to construct an extremely expensive store, which Council would then require to be knocked down in 25 years to be replaced with houses.

As is mentioned elsewhere Council chased away the floating restaurant project on the waterfront. That project would have created 135 full time jobs, paid significant taxes and provided \$5 million of work for Mission tradespeople.

Mission's waterfront is an asset that could be the envy of the Fraser Valley and an economic boon to Mission. But not with this Council's impractical plans

It is also insanity to place a Police Building and a City Hall in an area that is almost certain to flood at some stage in the future.

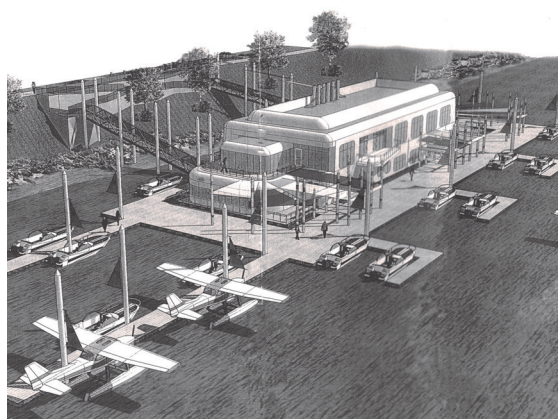
The Lost Opportunity

There was a golden opportunity for Mission to kick start the waterfront with a tax and job producing project.

The plan was for a floating restaurant constructed in the former Expo 86 McBarge, including a floatplane and jet boat base.

It would have generated \$5million of work for Mission tradespeople and 135 full time jobs.

It would also have attracted visitors and revenue to Mission.



However, while Mission Council, was actively encouraging the developer to proceed, at the same time bid against him for the land (presumably as the site of a new City Hall)

They then refused to let the application even go to Public Hearing, despite obvious strong public support for the project.

Aside from the obvious ethical considerations, this sent a strong message to the business community that Mission is not a desirable place to do business.

So instead of a tax and job producing business which could have been a catalyst for waterfront development, we are left with a piece of derelict polluted land.

City Square A \$100,000 folly



No, your eyes don't deceive you.

Council voted to spend \$100,000 creating a "square" in the outlined area, supposedly to vitalise downtown. It is obviously a poor location, difficult to access with little pedestrian traffic.

It is easy to guess its likely uses after dark for various undesirable activities.

Downtown will not be revitalised by this hair-brained scheme.

Visit our online forum at
mission.freeforums.org

What's the Secret?

Mission Council discusses a lot of public business in secret at in-camera meetings. In fact, in recent months they have spent more time meeting in-camera than in public. More than twice as much time as previous Councils.

The law says all meetings must be in public unless they deal with personnel, legal or land purchase issues.

Since the meetings are secret we only get occasional clues as to what goes on behind closed doors.

Two recent examples which leaked were their decision to hire a PR spin doctor to spin their position on the PSIT bylaw and a plan to try to organise private meetings with local newspapers on contentious issues before informing the public.

When these items "leaked" their reaction was to commission an RCMP investigation into how the leak happened.

Time to open up the doors— as the law requires.

Mission Accomplished Not yet, Mr Mayor!

Mayor Atebe's sunny optimism is his trademark and it is often appropriate, but occasionally it seems to blind him to Mission's problems.

Three years ago in an interview with a Kenyan newspaper he described his success in Mission. The article said

So what was Mr Atebe offering voters in Mission? "Change," he said.

When he was elected mayor, Mission was a bedroom community where residents spent the night after working and shopping in other towns. Under his watch, Mr Atebe said, Mission has become a complete community where residents can find employment, recreation and rest.

He has done this by planning and expanding industrial and commercial developments, which in turn have increased the town's tax base. He says he has changed Mission into a vibrant community.

In fact, the percentage of Mission residents working and shopping in other towns has not changed at all under his watch and taxes have continued to rise. It is fine to celebrate success but it is foolish to believe all our problems have been solved.

CITIZENS FOR RESPONSIBLE MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT WHO ARE WE?

We are simply a growing group of concerned citizens who are becoming extremely alarmed at the disastrous course the current Council is following. In this and future publications we plan to highlight the problems and mismanagement as well as suggesting solutions. We hope this will either cause current Council to change direction or encourage candidates who combine vision with practicality to step forward before the next election.

Editors for this edition Allison Noon, Larry Nundal, and Susan Jorissen

The Water P3 Debacle

Mission Council gave only a few days notice that they wanted "public input" into the \$300 million proposal for a Public Private Partnership to build and operate a new Water Source from Stave Lake.

However, they were not prepared to give the public the required information nor were they themselves prepared to make such a momentous decision.

They did not present the costs of the alternative which was private design/build and public operation of the system. This method has proved cheaper in many jurisdictions, combining the transfer of risk in design and construction to a private partner, while retaining the operation of such a critical resource in public hands.

They didn't present it simply because they hadn't even considered it.

The report recommending a P3 was not even complete yet Council were ready to make a decision.

Scarcely due diligence for \$300 million.

Fire !

The commitment to hire 16 full time firemen at a rate of 4 each year was difficult to understand when none of our neighbours went this expensive route until they were much larger than Mission.

The program has apparently been suspended at 8 firemen as it is now realized that it is too expensive to continue.

This boondoggle will cost the best part of a million dollars a year and has resulted in a decline of morale within many of our paid call volunteers.

It is doubtful that this has increased our safety in the slightest.

On the plus side, response times during the day may be slightly quicker.

On the negative side the usual stringent physical and medical requirements imposed on recruits to almost all Fire Departments were not applied.

So they may get there quicker but may not be physically equal to the tasks facing them.