

Calgary's new Central Library

IN THE NEWS

Mayor's wish list garners initial support

Gwendolyn Richards, with files From Tarina White and Colette Derworiz. Calgary Herald. Apr 24, 2004. pg. B.1

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More than half of Calgary's aldermen support the mayor's plan to use GST money to create a fund for community projects, such as building an aquarium at the zoo and upgrading Heritage Park. Of the 11 polled, eight agree with the creation of a "community investment fund" that would use an expected \$100 million refunded from the federal government over five years to pay for the proposed projects. Three aldermen could not be reached for comment. Two remained undecided.

"Creating a community investment fund is really looking at the future needs of the city," said Ward 13 Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart. "Whether it comes to libraries, or expanding the zoo, all these are economic drivers for the city.

The motion will be put to council during Monday's regular meeting.

It proposes the fund pay for the construction of a new library, an aquarium facility at the zoo, an upgrade for Heritage Park and either enhancing or building a new Science Centre.

At least one alderman is against the proposal. Ward 12 Ald. Ric McIver said the city needs to keep taxes in line, either by using the GST refund or last year's surplus. Transportation is also a key issue for all Calgarians, he said. "We certainly still have lots of holes in the program on the transportation side."

Others say the city needs to ensure more than just roads are being looked after.

"People scream and cry about them when they want these roads built. Two weeks after they're built, nobody says thank you," said Ward 11 Ald. Barry Erskine. He said visitors coming to Calgary will remember the attractions and want to return if they're good. "These things need to be maintained. They need to move forward, always growing and adding to their ability to attract people," he said.

Ward 6 Ald. Craig Burrows supports the proposal, saying he likes the idea of using money to leverage more cash from the provincial and federal governments, as well as from corporate and private donations. "It's not just a blank cheque," he said, adding quality of life is important in a city the size of Calgary. "It's a balance."