

How to save \$2,000,000 dollars without even trying

At the March 13th meeting of Council, the vice-president of the Yorkton Business Improvement District (YBID) is quoted as urging Council to fast track the installation of ‘decorative’ street lamps in downtown Yorkton. What YBID is proposing is that the City pay up front while YBID spreads its commitment out over a decade. “We need to be leaders in our growing community...” he is quoted as saying. Council, architects of the unending Gallagher Black Hole Project, has once again caved. Who wouldn’t want to be ‘leaders in the community’?

Unfortunately, neither the City nor YBID can claim to be showing any real form of leadership. *Calgary’s* planners, maybe, but certainly not here.

Calgary had a problem. The City was expanding and its power costs for street lighting were skyrocketing. The problem was that its taxpayers, apparently unlike those in Yorkton, did not have bottomless pockets. So, what Calgary did was replace a number of their old, inefficient ‘cobra head’ street lamps (the kind we still use in most places) with new, energy efficient ones. Lo and behold, not only did their power costs drop, they dropped enough that the City was able to use that money to buy even more streetlights. Over the next few years, Calgary replaced thousands of their old expensive lights essentially for free. To date, they have some 37,000 new streetlights totally paid for, and additionally save \$1.7 million in ongoing energy costs every year.

Yorkton, on the other hand, has installed 19 double ‘acorn’ light standards. They may look ok in the daytime, but that ends when you actually turn them on. First, the design is far less energy efficient, more polluting and more expensive to operate than the old ‘cobra heads’ they replaced. Plus, they’re downright ugly at night, not that you can actually look right at them. From a safety standpoint, the bright, unshielded glare from these fixtures inhibit drivers’ night vision, and their brightness relative to the traffic signals make them inherently dangerous.

Undaunted, the City is apparently in a rush to spend another two million taxpayer dollars to install a bunch more of these money-burning eyesores downtown (to match those in the new north east residential developments, I guess). It’s not from lack of knowledge; City planners and at least one Councilor are very much aware of the savings to be had through more efficient lighting, yet Council chooses to tax instead. Not only is Council not ‘leading’, they’re not even that good at ‘following’.

So, we can pay now and continue to pay as power rates increase. Or, we can stop installing inefficient lights immediately, and instead begin installing lighting that’s both decorative AND efficient. Then, with the help of the money saved on power bills, slowly replace all the rest, including the ones installed downtown. The plan is working in other cities, and would work here as well; its simply a matter of choice.

Interested persons can ‘Google’ “EnviroSmart” and “Calgary”, then call up a Councilor of your choice to tell them you know a better way to light things up without spending obscene amounts of money: better lights for less, ongoing energy savings, and no new \$2 million dollar tax.

‘That’ is what I would call leadership.

Jim Huziak / Yorkton