

## **2010 Property Taxes Questions and Answers**

### **How does the City set its tax rates?**

The City sets tax rates based on a financial plan that forecasts revenue and expenditures for a five year period. The tax rates are applied to the assessed value of your property to determine the amount of property tax you pay to the City. Your assessed value is determined independently by BC Assessment Authority. Council is aware of the tax rates charged in other communities and with the 2010 increase our rates will be equivalent to the average tax rates of similar municipalities in BC. Your tax bill includes amounts collected for other agencies, such as the Alberni Clayoquot Regional District. The City does not control these amounts, but they affect your bottom line – how much property tax you pay.

### **Catalyst paid their 2009 taxes - why is the City continuing with the increase to residential taxes?**

The City may have won the battle but the issue of industrial tax rates is not resolved. The City cannot depend on full payment from Catalyst in 2010. Council believes it must account for the potential revenue shortfall so the five year financial plan was prepared on the basis of receiving Catalyst's 2009 taxes but experiencing a revenue shortfall in 2010.

### **What options are available to assist me with paying my property taxes?**

If you are having trouble making your payments there are options available that may assist you. There are now more ways to qualify for Tax Deferment or the City can set you up for fixed monthly payments. For more information regarding tax deferment or monthly payments contact City Hall 250 723-2146.

### **What is being done to resolve the industrial tax issue?**

The City is in discussion with Catalyst for a solution of mutual benefit. Meanwhile the province and the Union of BC Municipalities have a task force reviewing industrial taxation and their recommendations are due in September. Any number of options is available to the province including legislating limits on industrial taxation.

The City adopted a plan in 2008 to reduce industrial tax rates by \$425,000 per year over five years. This will have the effect of reducing annual industrial tax revenues by over \$2 million by the year 2012. The City will continue with this plan, but has not committed to further reductions. Taxes will be applied to major industry in 2010 based on the City's original plan.

### **Why is the city changing to biweekly residential garbage collection?**

Bi weekly collection is a move to reduce waste, diminish green house gas emissions and reduce the City's costs.

**Where can I get more Financial Plan information?**

Budget documents are available on the City's website ([www.portalberni.ca](http://www.portalberni.ca)) or from the front desk at City Hall.

**How do Port Alberni's costs compare to similar municipalities?**

Each municipality is unique. Their Councils decide what services are provided and at what level. Many municipalities rely on their regional district to provide services like sewer, water, parks and recreation. These municipalities have lower tax rates as a result. In Port Alberni the City provides almost all of the local services to its residents, in fact the City provides services that the region benefits from such as recreational facilities. Nonetheless Port Alberni has a residential tax rate below average for Cities of a similar population. Financial information comparing all of BC's municipalities is available from ([http://www.cd.gov.bc.ca/lgd/infra/statistics\\_index.htm](http://www.cd.gov.bc.ca/lgd/infra/statistics_index.htm)).

**How do I know the City manages its finances appropriately?**

The City is subject to many checks and balances. Legislation requires detailed financial statements and reports that are all available to the public, this enables you or any watch dog the opportunity to review the "books" and ask any questions of Mayor and Council. All questions received will be addressed! Our financial statements are audited by an independent auditor who makes his reports public each year. The Ministry of Community Development and the BC Ombudsman oversee the procedures of the City and any concerns can be forwarded to them.

**Do you have any more questions? Please submit them to:**

**[russell\\_dyson@portalberni.ca](mailto:russell_dyson@portalberni.ca) or call 250 720-2810.**