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HOMELESS HOUSING
New alderman to ask for delay
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CITY & REGION

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Free flu shot clinics forced to move

MICHELLE LANG
CALGARY HERALD

Flu shot clinics are the latest victims of the city's tight rental market, with Calgary Health Region announcing Friday that two of its four clinics will relocate this weekend.

The health authority is wrapping up its influenza clinics at Currie Barracks and First Alliance Church this afternoon.

Replacement locations will open Monday at Southwood United Church in the southwest and Ogden United Church in the southeast.

The CHR is moving the clinics because the sites could only accommodate their operations for short periods of time.

"It reflects the difficulty of finding venues," said Dr. Judy MacDonald, the CHR's deputy medical officer of health.

"It was challenging given the real estate situation in Calgary . . . Some of those sites couldn't accommodate us for extended periods."

The health region also had to move its northeast flu clinic in October, relocating from the Centre Street Church to Robert McClure United Church.

The clinics offer free flu shots to people at risk of developing influenza-related complications.

In past years, the CHR offered flu vaccines at Calgary Co-op locations, but officials say the program grew too large to be held at the grocery stores.

Real estate experts weren't surprised the CHR had difficulty finding large locations to hold mass immunization clinics, particularly when the health region only wanted to rent the space for several months.

Mike Gigliuk, the Alberta director of research for CB Richard Ellis, a commercial real estate company, said many landlords are only interested in five-year lease commitments.

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Graham Barclay, Bloomberg News
The real estate market is too hot to offer short-term leases for flu clinics.

1912 SCHOOL SOLD FOR \$14.1 MILLION



Stuart Gradon, Calgary Herald
Calgary Board of Education chairwoman Pat Cochrane and Michael Lobsinger, CEO of Lake Placid Group, announce the sale of the vacant King Edward School to the developer.

Buyer vows to breathe new life into landmark

Sandstone building will be preserved

SARAH MCGINNIS
CALGARY HERALD

New life is coming to King Edward School now that a private developer has purchased the historic building.

The Calgary Board of Education announced Friday it sold the 95-year-old school and 1.25 hectares surrounding it to Lake Placid Group for \$14.1 million.

"We're very excited. This is a 1912 landmark. Lake Placid is really looking forward to continuing that historic opportunity and to build something that's going to be retained for another hundred years," said company CEO Michael Lobsinger.

He would not indicate

whether the firm plans to build condominiums, homes or a commercial project on the site.

The property, zoned residential, will probably face rezoning as converting the existing school into condos, stores or mixed-use space would violate current city building bylaws.

Much of the fields surrounding the sandstone school could also see new construction as part of a number of plans Lake Placid has for the property.

King Edward School isn't a designated heritage site and is not protected from demolition. The property is, however, included in the city's inventory of potential heritage buildings and has considerable historic value.

Neighbours and community groups are taking a wait-and-see approach to the project.

There are concerns about the loss of green space in the neighbourhood and apprehension over developments that may not fit into the largely residen-

tial area, said South Calgary Community Association spokeswoman Robin McLeod.

"Because King Edward has played a public role in our community since 1912, we're hoping that there will be some public component to it so it will be forever open in some capacity to the public," said McLeod.

The preservation of King Edward School was one of the main conditions of the sale, said CBE board chairwoman Pat Cochrane.

"We know our sandstone schools are very important to the history of Calgary and are some of the very few historical buildings still existing in Calgary. It was very important to us that whoever was the successful bidder would maintain this facility," said Cochrane.

The \$14.1 million sale price for the school is \$3.2 million more than expected.

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Council to debate 4.5% tax increase

Policing and snow removal are priorities

KIM GUTTORMSON
CALGARY HERALD

Calgarians will see more police officers downtown, better snow removal and more affordable housing units next year — part of a 4.5 per cent increase in their property taxes.

Whether that tax hike — \$47 on the municipal portion of the tax bill based on a home assessed at \$361,000 — changes depends on whether council makes any substantial additions or subtractions during its upcoming budget deliberations.

City hall critic Dan Kelly of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business said that with the infrastructure funding the province is giving the municipality — \$3.3 billion over 10 years — there is no excuse to increase taxes further.

"I think taxpayers would rightly go ballistic if there's any talk of going above what's been forecast," he said. "I would hope they'd be able to do better than they had planned."

The 4.5 per cent increase was set in the fall of 2005, when council established its first three-year budget. Each November, Mayor Dave Bronconnier and the aldermen make necessary adjustments.

This year's opportunity to tweak the budget begins Nov. 19. Part of the debate will be whether to include at least \$12.5 million in requests that at this point don't have funding, including improving fire and EMS response capability, public safety communications staffing, and extended snow and ice removal.

Each \$7 million added into the operating budget is the equivalent of another one per cent tax increase.

Finance staff have already put another \$59.2 million in the

2008 operating budget to address council priorities — including more police and bylaw officers, hiring permanent rather than on-call paramedics, snow clearing and an additional 289 city employees.

The budget includes 10 new police officers for downtown and 14 for special duty teams in outlying districts. With \$2.6 million in funding for snow clearing, nine additional sanders should improve road safety within four hours and 46 minutes of a storm.

However, because of the growth in the city — almost 18,000 people moved here over 2006-2007 — that \$59.2 million can be provided through higher-than-projected fee and tax revenues, director of finance Eric Sawyer said. "We're able to manage it with changes in revenue," he said.

Some aldermen say given the rate of growth in the city and the demands that brings, along with inflationary costs, council will do well to stay to 4.5 per cent.

"It will be quite an accomplishment to stay at 4.5," Ald. Bob Hawkesworth said, adding Edmonton city council is contemplating a 10.9 per cent tax increase. "I think if we can manage to keep it 4.5, we've done something quite significant in this inflationary environment."

Hawkesworth said when they sit down to look at next year's budget, he wants to ensure the amount of transit provided is keeping pace with demand.

Ald. Joe Ceci said he wants to stay at 4.5 per cent.

"It's what I would be following through with in terms of the projections and targets set," he said. "The caveat is, always, if there are additional kinds of services Calgarians want and we don't have the revenue stream for, we have to look at taxes."

The budget — the first for the four new aldermen on council — also includes an increase to the capital budget of \$203.7 million, funded through revenues, reserves and self-supported debt.

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This year's budget would add 24 new police officers.



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