

RICHMOND NEWS

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VOICES

Is there fire, if there's smoke?



Eve Edmonds
RICHMOND NEWS

Wow, that's some sordid reading. I could imagine Netflix lining up to secure the rights for a *House of Cards* kind of political drama.

I'm talking, of course, about Darryl Plecas' bombshell report that explains why he, as Speaker of the House, had the B.C. Legislatures' clerk, Craig James, and Sergeant-at-Arms, Gary Lenz, frog-marched off the grounds of the provincial parliament on Nov. 20.

At the time, he pointed to a RCMP investigation, but many felt he had over-stepped his bounds, particularly given no one else seemed to know what was going on — including James and Lenz.

The whole ordeal had the legislature reeling because while "clerk" might not sound like the most prestigious job title, when it comes to the legislative bureaucracy, it's about as high as you can get. It's basically the CEO of parliament. Meanwhile, the Sergeant-at-Arms is head of security — again, no slouch job.

So now the report is out and, as Plecas predicted, it's having folks choking on their lunch — actually he said "throw up." Regardless, the alleged accounts of lavish spending of taxpayers' money and complete disregard for protocol are indeed nauseating. We're talking cabinets full of high-end scotch paid for by us and "business trip" where almost no business is done.

The local angle is, of course, our own Linda Reid, MLA for Richmond South. Reid was the Speaker of the House from 2013-2017 and is currently Deputy Speaker. This begs the question, if Plecas was able to uncover all this alleged wrongdoing, then why didn't Reid?

Moreover, the report singles out a mysterious MLA whose expenses were red-flagged by a legislative assistant. But, according to the report, James shut down further inquiry, saying "we will all wear it" if she was to be investigated.

The MLA is not named in the report, but appears to be Reid. (See page 7)

When asked, Reid said she was never made aware of problems with her expenses and she has no idea why James made that comment. Nevertheless, Green Party leader Andrew Weaver is calling for Reid's resignation.

And here's the crazy thing, we're talking about a \$6 cab fare while also claiming mileage, or claiming a meal per diem for a meeting where food was provided — improper yes, but hardly the stuff to bring down a government. Besides, there may be a valid explanation, but the issue for Reid is that since no investigation was held, she had no opportunity to explain herself.

The bigger concern in all this is the opaque relationship between the Speaker and the Clerk, as Plecas outlines. It's still unclear to me who the Clerk answers to. Reid seemed to say it wasn't her. She also agreed there is too little oversight of the clerk's office.

Clearly, this is just the beginning of a complex investigation. The good news is that an investigation is happening.



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➤ **Year of the Pig** 

Aberdeen's zodiac family united at last

Alan Campbell
RICHMOND NEWS

Joey Kwan positively beamed with pride as she revealed the last of her 12 "babies" to the public.

Each year for the last 12 years, Kwan, Aberdeen Centre's director of public relations, has helped create each of the dozen, colourful people-sized characters that represent the animals of the Chinese zodiac.

Every year, she has kept her creation up her sleeve, only to reveal the finished design in the weeks leading up to the Lunar New Year, which is Feb. 5 this year.

And, seeing as this is her 12th year at Aberdeen Centre, the last of her zodiac "babies" – the pig – has been unveiled in a Chinese garden in the shopping centre's central atrium and takes pride of place, in sequence, alongside his 11 zodiac siblings.

"All these characters, I have been saving up for the past 12 years at Aberdeen, now they are all revealed together for the first time," smiled Kwan.

"The first year I came to Aberdeen, I developed the mouse and then developed them all; I worked with our designer over the years to create each one. We developed them together; they are like our babies."

Taking the *Richmond News* on a tour around the "garden," Kwan introduced each one as if it was a member of her family.

Here's what she had to say about each of them, right up to this year, the Year of the Pig:

Tiger: He is very courageous and brave and not afraid to take on a challenge;

Rabbit: An agile, cute and friendly person;

Dragon: Is symbolic of being loyal; everyone likes to have a son born in the Year of the Dragon;

Snake: Is very smart, agile and adept to changes;

Horse: They like to run free in the field, but don't give them too many rules;

Lamb: This one tends to have a very gentle temper, accepts changes well and is a very understanding person;



➤ **Aberdeen Centre's** director of public relations, Joey Kwan, (above) with her latest creation for the Year of the Pig. During her 12 years working at the centre, Kwan has helped design each of the 12 animals of the Chinese zodiac, which are being displayed together for the first time (above right and below). *Alan Campbell photos*



have a Western, cartoon-style, cute face, but are dressed with Chinese traditional costumes," she said.

"Western people are very interested in our zodiac signs. Every show I put on (at the centre) starts from my mind."

As well as the people-sized Chinese zodiac animals, the garden is littered with giant gold coins, giant mandarin plants and cherry blossom trees.

"I created this scene for selfies and Instagram hits, as well," Kwan added.

Aberdeen Centre's Chinese New Year (CNY) events kick off Wednesday, Jan. 30 with the Chinese New Year Flower & Gift Fair, which runs to Feb. 5.

Beyond the flower and gift fair, Aberdeen starts ramping up for CNY on Monday, Feb. 4 with countdown celebrations starting at 8:30 p.m., including Fairchild Radio's pre-countdown stage show and personal blessings from the God of Fortune at 10:30 p.m.

Aberdeen's Golden Dragon and Lion Dance takes place on CNY itself on Tuesday, Feb. 5 at 11 a.m. in the courtyard.

And on Saturday and Sunday, Feb. 9 and 10, Aberdeen plays host to the CNY Cultural Showcase Celebration, which features performances from the BC Chinese Music Association and Vancouver Academy of Dance on the Saturday and Vancouver Youth Philharmonic Orchestra and Colors of Dance Academy on the Sunday.

For more information, go online to AberdeenCentre.com/en/events.

Monkey: He is very energetic, is non-stop and intelligent;

Chicken: A very patient person who loves detail and fashion;

Dog: He is a stable and faithful person, who likes to stick to the rules and guards his homeland well;

Pig: Is very gentle, like the lamb, works well with people and has a good temper.

Kwan said the design of her characters is very much created with an "East meets West" theme.

"Aberdeen Centre is very much East meets West; so you can see the characters



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