



IAN LINDSAY/Vancouver Sun

**BRIDGE PASSAGE:** Two tugboats manoeuvre a boom of logs under highway bridge and parallel CP Rail span on the Pitt River.

# CITY & REGION

SECTION  
**B**

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IAN SMITH/Vancouver Sun

**\$39-MILLION SMILE:** Richmond Mayor Greg Halsey-Brandt shows off model of new new city hall expected to cost about \$39 million.

## Richmond hires feng shui master to ensure harmony in new building

The move, a first for a major civic project, is a mark of respect for the customs of the city's large Asian population.

LARRY PYNN  
*Vancouver Sun*

In a first for a major civic project, Richmond is consulting a feng shui master to ensure its new \$39-million city hall meets with the cultural approval of the city's large and influential Asian population.

"We represent a significant Asian community," Richmond city administrator George Duncan confirmed in an interview. "We must respect their customs."

Although the hiring of a feng shui master to ensure harmony in construction is

common in commercial buildings catering to Asians in Greater Vancouver and in government-owned buildings in Hong Kong, Richmond city hall is believed to be setting a B.C. precedent.

"For B.C., yes, this is the first time for a government utility," confirmed consultant Sherman Tai, the Richmond-based feng shui master who has been hired to help guide architects through the construction of city hall.

Feng shui experts view the earth as comprised of five basic elements: water, wood, fire, earth and metal. Grouped in a positive, creative sequence, these elements will create balance and harmony. Color and even the placement of buildings also come into play.

Please see **Feng shui, B2**

## Builders lien law should be delayed, Liberal MLA says

DAVID HOGBEN  
*Sun Legislature Bureau*

VICTORIA — The provincial government should consider not proclaiming the new Builders Lien Act until problems can be ironed out, Liberal justice critic Geoff Plant said Tuesday.

He said real estate agents, lawyers and builders have problems with the act that need to be addressed, or conveying property in B.C. will become more complicated and stacked in favor of the buyer.

"What has been created here is a classic unfair economic lever," he said.

The act, which is expected to be proclaimed before December, would require property buyers to withhold 10 per cent of the total purchase price to protect themselves against liens. This would apply to all types of property, excluding bare land which is owned outright.

# Feng shui expert explains views

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"We want the people of Richmond to have a peaceful, healthy and wealthy environment to live in," Tai said in an interview Tuesday.

Richmond has a population of 150,000, of whom an estimated one-third are Chinese-speaking.

Tai has already recommended that a water garden near the entrance to the new city hall adopt rounded rather than straight lines. He has also suggested that a metal statue be placed between the public gallery and council chamber.

"It will be good not just for the people, but for the government officials," he said. "They can have a better performance to serve the people and avoid argument and conflict for a peaceful and harmonious environment."

Tai, who operates as Tai Fortune Teller and Assoc., emphasized that feng shui is a matter of balance, not superstition, and that both Asians and Caucasians are ignorant about the concept.

For instance, he said, feng shui has nothing to do with the placement of

mirrors or the cutting down of trees. "It's not like that," he said. "It's just the balance of the five elements. A lot of people misunderstand."

While the municipal building is the most expensive in Richmond history, council avoided a public referendum on the issue because it didn't need to borrow money.

Of the total \$39 million, \$27.4 million will come from the sale of two city-owned properties, on Odlin Road and Westminster Highway, and the remaining \$11.6 million from money set aside for a cancelled health service building.

Richmond Mayor Greg Halsey-Brandt said he makes no apology for not seeking approval from voters, arguing it is different than asking the public for recreational facilities such as a swimming pool or skating rink.

"It's a necessity," he said, noting that upgrading of the existing building would have cost about 90 per cent of the cost of a new facility. "A building to house our staff isn't a luxury."

Construction of the 120,000-square-foot city hall at Granville and Number Three Road is expected to begin in July 1998, with completion by March 2000.