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# Musqueam Indians Spared Big Tax Bill, Saves City

The Musqueam Indian Band gets a city tax exemption of \$31,740 a year, city officials reported today.

Officials said if the Indian-occupied area of the 420-acre Musqueam reserve was assessed the same as other property in the city it would pay \$49,000 in taxes.

But the city receives only \$17,260 in nominal payments from the Department of Indian Affairs for services provided to the Indians.

Officials outlined the tax picture to a city council committee studying a request by the Indians to share in city taxes collected from leased property on the reserve.

The Indians have leased more than 258 acres of the reserve to golf courses and subdivisions with the city providing services for taxes it collects.

Lawyer Garde Gardom, in a brief on behalf of the Indians, claimed that they are entitled to a share of the taxes collected by the city.

Gardom said the Indians pay the capital cost of installing services on the leased land and create a handsome tax source for the city.

But city officials pointed out today that the Indians are reimbursed for the capital costs from lease charges to persons leasing the property.

"The taxes paid by the lessees of the surrendered lands are paid to the city in consideration of the municipal services which are provided to these lands on the same basis as any other lands within the city," said an officials' report.

"There does not appear to be any evidence to support the general position taken in the queam Indian Band has been brief, namely that the Mus-queam unfairly treated by the City of Vancouver," the report added.

Corporation counsel Russell Baker said if the Indian band wants to share in taxes collected from the leased land it should become a municipality and provide its own services.

(The reserve is presently located entirely within Vancouver city limits.)

"But I don't think that would be practical," said Baker. "What they want now is the best of both worlds — the city to provide the services, and

they to collect some of the taxes."

He said the Indians' request was the same as if the Canadian Pacific Railway installed services and created a subdivision on a block of its property and then asked for a share of the taxes the city collected on the subdivision.

Baker noted that the CPR would base the sale of its land on its cost of creating the subdivision and would recover its costs that way.

Finance director Art Parkinson produced the tax picture on the Indian-occupied part of the reserve and said the city should ask for a grant from the Indian affairs department equivalent to the amount of services provided.

He noted that grants in lieu of taxes are paid on all other federally-owned land in the city.