

Wolfville's 23/24 Budget

At their March 21 meeting, Council approved the 2023/24 Town Operations Plan and related Operating Budget, the Ten-Year Capital Investment Plan, as well as the Water Utility's Three-Year Operating and Capital Budget.

Here are some questions and answers to help you understand the process and what the budget means for ratepayers in our community.

Q. What's the budget amount?

A. The Operating Budget, now approved by Council, has revenues (money in) and expenditures (money out) in the amount of **\$13,457,000**.

Q. What is the residential tax rate?

A. To pay for all the expenditures, Council has set **the Residential Tax Rate at \$1.475 per hundred dollars of assessment**.

Q. Is this more than last year?

A. Yes. This is an increase of 1.75 cents per hundred dollars of assessment.

Q. Who does this assessment of property?

A. [Property Valuation Services Corporation](#) (PVSC) does an assessment for every property in the Province.

Q. What is the CAP?

A. [The Capped Assessment Program](#) is also managed by the PVSC. This program The Capped Assessment Program (CAP) places a 'cap' on the amount that the taxable assessment for eligible residential property can increase year over year.

Q. What does this mean for taxpayers?

A. Many residential properties experienced a significant increase in assessment, including those under the CAP program, at a maximum of 7.7 per cent, and with the addition of 1.75 cents on the residential rate, many property owners will see a **9 per cent increase overall**.

Q. What does this look like for an average homeowner in Wolfville?

A. The average value of a home in Wolfville is \$340,000. In this case, \$445 more than the last tax year.

Q. Besides an increase in assessed value and the CAP, what has made the tax rate go up?

- A. Everyone is impacted by the high rate of inflation when making purchases and the Town is facing notable cost increases in a number of areas. Supplies like PVC pipe, used in our underground infrastructure have increased by 30 to 40 per cent. The Town also set aside additional funds for the future replacement Fire Department trucks, where increases are expected to land in the 30 to 40 per cent range.

External organizations providing education, transit and waste management services have also added costs in the budget, with increases beyond the current rate of inflation. This is also caused by increases in our population which impacts cost sharing formulas

Q. What else is driving the increase?

- A. Internally, new, or increased funding as been included for priorities including the Traffic and Mobility program, in both capital and operational dollars.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI), Accessibility initiatives, an enhanced Low Income Tax Exemption and support for the Acadia University Pool operation are also now built into the budget.

Q. Why not just cut services to reduce cost?

- A. During the budget process, Council was not receiving feedback that asked for cuts to levels of service.

Q. How long is the budget process?

- A. The budget process happens year-round, with Council and staff interacting with the public in various formats including regular Committee of the Whole meetings, Advisory Committee meetings, Wolfville Blooms project pages, and any other time feedback is provided to the Town. The formal process, in accordance with a Town Standard Operating Procedure, starts in November with a goal to approve the Operations Plan and Budget by the March Council meeting.

Q. What else is in the budget?

The Town's **Capital Budget has Year 1 totaling \$5,814,000** and includes:

- capital reserve funding of \$2,031,100
- operating reserve funding of \$130,000
- long-term debt funding of \$2,033,300
- Federal Gas Tax grant funding of \$430,000

- ACOA grant funding of \$376,700
- Federal/Provincial ICIP grant funding of 167,900
- other grant funding of 150,000
- other external grant/contribution funding of \$170,000
- \$325,000 from the Town's Water Utility, for its share of street infrastructure projects

The Town's Water Utility Operating Budget will see operating revenues of \$1,143,800, operating expenditures of \$1,074,000, non-operating revenues of \$25,000, and non-operating expenditures of \$216,000.

The Town's Water Utility Capital Budget will total \$864,300, including depreciation reserve funding of \$372,100, capital from revenue funding of \$70,000, long-term debt of \$399,900 and accumulated surplus funding of \$22,300.

Council has also set the Fire Protection Area Rate (pursuant to Section 80 of the Municipal Government Act) of \$0.06 per hundred dollars of assessment. The Business Development Area rate (pursuant to Section 56 of the Municipal Government Act) sits at \$0.25 per hundred dollars of commercial assessment.

Sewer users will pay \$6.00 per 1,000 gallons of water used by customer or a flat rate fee of \$115.00 per quarter, if applicable. The minimum quarterly charge for any metered customer is \$29.85 and sewer connection fees are set at \$6,500.

The Low-Income Property Tax Exemption household income qualification threshold is a maximum of \$38,000, and the maximum exemption is \$1,000.