

REQUEST FOR DECISION 033-2026

Title: Earnscliffe Ave Budget Increase & Tender Award
Date: 2026-05-05
Prepared by: Devin Lake, Director of Planning and Public Works
Contributors: Mark Fredericks, Senior Planner
Diana Gibson, Director of Corporate Services



SUMMARY

Earnscliffe Ave Budget Increase & Tender Award

The tender for [Earnscliffe Ave. re-construction](#) closed on April 22, 2026. The 3 submissions received, each had pricing that exceeded the amount currently budgeted in the 2026/27 Capital Investment Plan. This project has been budgeted for \$2.4 million and is intended to replace aging road infrastructure, improve safety and road functionality, and extend the service life of a street with important childcare and healthcare services located on it.

Staff are recommending an increase in the budget of an additional \$600,000 to a total of \$3 million to ensure this project can be awarded to a contractor and completed within the 2026 construction season.

This report outlines the bid costs, associated design budget, and land acquisitions involved in this important street, while seeking Council's approval to move forward with awarding the project to Dexter Construction for \$2,718,670 plus net HST (\$2,823,539.98 total award with net HST). The remaining ~\$175,000 will be used for finalizing three land acquisitions (\$50,000) and the rest for contingencies (approximately \$125,000).

DRAFT MOTION:

THAT COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE RECOMMENDS THAT COUNCIL APPROVE A BUDGET INCREASE OF \$600,000 FOR THE EARNSCLIFFE AVENUE RE-CONSTRUCTION PROJECT, FOR A TOTAL BUDGET OF \$3 MILLION, AND AWARD THE PROJECT TO DEXTER CONSTRUCTION.

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1) CAO COMMENTS

The CAO supports the recommendation of Staff.

2) LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Council's authority to approve capital budget amendments and award construction contracts is provided under the Nova Scotia Municipal Government Act (MGA), which grants Council responsibility for municipal financial management, capital expenditures, and the construction, maintenance, and replacement of municipal infrastructure.

The Town's Procurement Policy also states that: *The Chief Administrative Officer, is authorized to make contracts for the acquisition of goods and services where such expenditure does not exceed budget allocation by more than 10%, where a specific budget is established.*

- *For project budget allocations greater than \$100,000, the CAO is authorized to purchase where such expenditure is within 5% of budget allocation.*
- *Notwithstanding the variance %'s noted above, in any situation where cost of good/service exceed budget by \$100,000, or more, shall be deemed outside the CAO's purchase authority.*

Where the total bid costs, associated design budget, and land acquisitions involved with this project exceed the budget by more than \$100,000, Council's authorization is required.

3) STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommend that Council increase the budget by \$600,000 to a total project budget of \$3 million, to ensure that the project moves forward and can be completed during the 2026 construction season. A contingency is included – of approximately \$125,000. It is important to have a contingency on large street re-build projects to help cover minor unexpected changes.

4) REFERENCES AND ATTACHMENTS

1. Attachment 1 – tender submissions / bid results
2. 2026/2027 Operations Plan and [Capital Budget](#)

5) DISCUSSION

Earnscliffe Avenue was identified several years ago as having some of the worst infrastructure in Wolfville and was scheduled for replacement in 2026/27. The Earnscliffe re-construction project is included in Council's 2026/27 Capital Investment Plan to address the aging infrastructure above ground and below ground. This project aims to improve road conditions, accessibility, sidewalks and parking.

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Earnscliffe Avenue includes Quiet Park, medical clinics, a public health facility, residential uses, a nursing home and the Wolfville Children’s Centre. This street also connects many people from neighbourhoods in the western side, to the downtown or Wolfville School, via a public path between Earnscliffe Ave and Westwood Ave. This street is part of the Tidal Transit route (Kings Transit) which provides bus access to the range of services found here. Providing a new and safer street to these important community services, is still a priority.



Figure 1 – Street and Sidewalk condition examples

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Design and Consultation process

Staff worked with Hatch Engineering Ltd. to prepare a street layout and underground infrastructure plan that would return this street to a safe and accessible condition for all road users into the future. Consultation with several landowners also occurred during 2025 to understand the functional needs of places like the Children’s Centre and the Professional Centre clinic. The resulting street layout, and all underground systems were packaged into a technical engineering drawing set and specifications report.

Tender issue and posting

This work resulted in a tender being issued for a full street re-build of Earnscliffe Ave. on March 30, 2026, and closed on April 22, 2026. The Town received three compliant submissions. All bids exceeded the approved project budget, reflecting higher-than-anticipated construction costs. Contributing factors include increased material and labor costs, and the regional construction market (labour scarcity).

Tender submissions – evaluation

Staff have reviewed the 3 tender submissions and evaluated them in more detail. This scoring favors Dexter Construction, a well known and experienced contractor who can meet the Town’s requirements and expectations for a project of this scale. Staff evaluate this type of submission (with consultant support) using the following:

- **Price (40%):** Evaluated for competitiveness, relative to the budget
- **Relevant Past Experience (35%):** Specifically for municipal road reconstruction, underground utility work, and urban streetscapes
- **Construction Schedule (5%):** Feasibility of the timeline, specifically regarding traffic management, phasing, and completion deadlines
- **Project Personnel, Equipment, Scope of Practice (15%):** Qualifications of the project manager and superintendent, available equipment, areas of expertise and abilities
- **Safety Record (5%):** Evidence of COR (Certificate of Recognition)

Dexter’s bid was \$2,823,539.98 including net HST. This requires an increase in the project budget. As you can see from the scoring criteria above, price is an important metric but not the only consideration in scoring.

Staff are estimating an additional \$600,000 on top of the \$2.4 million originally budgeted would be adequate to complete this street in 2026. **This new total would be a \$3 million project budget.**

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Estimated breakdown of this budget:

- \$2,823,539 for contractor
- \$50,000 for land acquisitions (\$38,000 plus legal/subdivision costs)
- \$125,000 (Contingency) for potential change orders or additions. For example, there may be an opportunity to have a connection from the end of Earnscliffe Ave into the Acadia Woodland Trails, depending on land access across EKM parking lot (south).

Staff recommend that Council approve the requested budget increase and award the contract as outlined in this report.

6) FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Wolfville's Capital Investment Plan allocates over \$5 million to road investments—including East Main, University Avenue, Victoria Avenue, and Earnscliffe Avenue. The Earnscliffe Avenue project was specifically estimated at \$2.4 million. This amount requires an increase to reflect current pricing realities.

The 2026-27 Capital Budget approved funding for Earnscliffe Avenue to come from long-term borrowing. The Town has capacity in its debt servicing ratio to increase the cost of this road rehabilitation and continue to fund the entire project through long-term borrowing.

7) REFERENCES TO COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN

Fiscal Responsibility: *Ensure organizational sustainability and deliver public services using sound financial decision-making, through:*

- *Asset Management: Collect accurate and timely data to make informed decisions that inspire trust and confidence.*
- *Community Focus: Make Investments in public services reflective of community need*
- *Financial Planning and Management: Collect, administer, and manage funds in a transparent manner.*

8) COMMUNICATION REQUIREMENTS

- Communication with the selected contractor
- Communication with the neighborhood and landowners
- Communications plan and central landing page (blooms) being developed.

9) ALTERNATIVES

- Council may choose not to increase the budget
- Council may choose not to award the contract and re-issue the tender (with or without changes)

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ATTACHMENT 1 – TENDER BID RESULTS

Contractor	Bid price	Score
Misner Misner Excavation	\$2,406,999.20	90
Dexter Construction	\$2,718,670.00	97
Harbour Construction	\$4,244,465.00	82

April 30, 2026

Mark Fredericks
Senior Planner
Town of Wolfville
200 Dykeland Street
Wolfville, NS B4P 1A1

Dear Mr. Fredericks:

RE: Bid Results Review for WOL016-2025 Earnscliffe Avenue Reconstruction

On April 22, 2026 the bid for the above noted project were received. A summary of the bids is included below:

Bidder	Bid Price (Excluding HST)
Meisner Excavation	\$ 2,406,999
Dexter Construction	\$ 2,718,670
Harbour Construction	\$ 4,244,465

We understand that these prices have come in higher than the Town of Wolfville’s original anticipated budget for the project. As Wolfville’s review engineer, CBCL has conducted a review of the tender pricing and we believe it reflects industry pricing.

Unfortunately in recent years, pricing in the construction industry has experienced unprecedented escalation and this has been paired with high inflation. These year-over-year industry price increases have been high since the 2020 and are now paired with the recent tariffs and fuel price increases that have occurred this year in 2026. Increased fuel prices result in increased costs of construction including cost of: running site equipment, mobilizing, trucking, and manufacturing and delivering construction materials. In recent years labour availability and cost of skilled trades have also been a major factor contributing to higher construction costs.

The following are some specific points why bid prices might be higher than pre-tender budgets for this project:

- ▶ Three (3) bids is lower than ideal but about average. Contractor backlog of work is running about 6-7 months on average and this reduces number of bidders.

Mark Fredericks
April 30, 2026

- ▶ The low bid being 12% low suggests there was competition.
- ▶ The highest bidder being significantly high likely reflects contractor backlog.
- ▶ In addition to the recent fuel increases and tariffs, the capital cost of machinery replacement/leasing is increasing.
- ▶ Skilled construction labour availability across all 33 trades is in short supply with 9% of trade workers leaving the industry in the first 3 months of 2026, which is an all time record. Many departures are due to retirements of the most productive workers, 50 to 55 years old, leaving and few young workers are entering. The new hires are less costly but less productive driving up costs an adding to schedules.

All of these factors contribute to construction cost escalation and contractors price this escalation into bids. We hope this review was informative and we are happy to answer any further questions.

Yours very truly,

CBCL Limited



Paul Young, P.Eng.
Municipal Engineer
Direct: 902-421-7241
E-Mail: pyoung@cbcl.ca



Reviewed by:
Archie Thibeault
Estimating Coordinator

Attachments: Bid Results

CC: David Copp

Project No: 251096.00