



Have Your Say on the City's 2016 Budget

Date: Friday, January 8, 2016

For Immediate Release

VICTORIA, BC – Victoria City Council has given preliminary approval to the *Draft Financial Plan* and is looking for feedback from residents. This plan, combined with public input, will determine programs and services as well as key projects and initiatives for the community in the coming year.

The draft financial plan includes a 2016 operating budget totaling \$221 million and capital budget totaling \$51.2 million. The proposed budgets would result in an overall property tax increase of \$2.8 million or 2.31%. Combined with utility fees, the overall costs to homeowners would result in a 2.05% increase from 2015, and 2.19% for businesses. This equates to a \$63 increase for an average household (\$518,000 assessment) and a \$167 increase for a typical business (\$500,000 assessment).

"To all residents and business owners of Victoria, this is your City, this is your budget. Over the next few weeks Council wants to hear from you on the proposed priorities and capital projects," said Victoria Mayor Lisa Helps. "Last year we had over 1,500 participate in the budget process. The feedback received helps to inform Council's decision on the final financial plan, and the work we all do together in 2016 to continue to make the City great."

Highlights of the 2016 budget include:

- Provides \$10.4 million for transportation including new bike lanes, crosswalks and pathways, including David Foster Harbour Pathway, LED streetlight replacements
- Invests \$68 million in public safety (police, fire and bylaw)
- Invests approximately \$16.4 million in the City's parks and recreation facilities, including 70 parks, 72 hectares of natural areas, 39 playgrounds, 23 tennis courts, 12 off-leash areas and 45 sports fields
- Continues to invest in arts and culture, with over \$1.4 million including public art, festivals, special events, Butler Book Prize and the Poet Laureate program
- Provides greater support for neighbourhoods and proposes new participatory budgeting methods, and grants for placemaking and animation of public spaces
- Introduction of a new on-street parking ambassador model to foster a positive parking experience and support an active and vibrant downtown
- Establish a strategic real estate function to effectively manage the City's \$1.1 billion in real estate holdings
- Continued focus on economic development supporting innovation and creativity aimed at attracting and retaining businesses. Includes a new Business Hub at City Hall, a welcoming and collaborative first point of contact for anyone looking to do business in Victoria.

- Installation of a universal washroom/change room in Crystal Pool and Fitness Centre
- Improvements to Vic West Park including upgrades to the skate park and playgrounds, leash optional fencing and Dallas Road dog related improvements
- Invests \$850,000 in retaining walls and railings including Dallas Road seawall and Douglas Street retaining wall
- \$13.5 million to replace aging pipes and underground infrastructure, including some of the City's oldest pipes installed in 1891 to ensure clean water and environmental protection for the harbour and City's natural areas
- \$4.7 million in continued funding for the Greater Victoria Public Library

Building on public participation from the 2015 Financial Plan process, the City is providing tools to encourage greater participation from the public, including detailed information, a [budget explainer video](#), and a Town Hall on January 21. The Town Hall will be interactive and webcast live. Comments to the Town Hall can be provided in person, online, through social media or by telephone.

Background materials, including the *Draft Financial Plan Budget at a Glance* and online survey are available at www.victoria.ca/budget

— 30 —

For More Information:

Katie Hamilton, Director of Citizen Engagement and Strategic Planning
Office: 250.361.0210
Mobile: 250.217.8343