

Mayor Deb Higgins, November 29, 2013

The 2014 budget for the City of Moose Jaw puts in place numerous changes, not only in the process we use in developing the budget, but also by enhancing the focus on providing basic services for citizens of our City. This budget provides a turning point in the way we provide services to the citizens of Moose Jaw and the efficiency by which those services are being delivered.

Most notable is the work that went into the development of the budget. Planning sessions were held on infrastructure, land development and planning, along with a day-long session to update the City's Strategic Plan and review the response from the Citizen Survey. All this information went into the setting of priorities and, eventually, the business plans put forward in the budget by departments. This is the first time Council, along with Administration, reviewed this information prior to a budget being developed and it was important in setting priorities for the coming year.

City Council received a presentation on the City's 2014 draft budget this week and while substantial work has been done to date developing the budget, it still requires final review and discussion before its acceptance.

At first glance, there are a number of areas that stand out for me as priorities. The need to focus on our base programs and services speaks to the expectations and responses in the Citizen Survey, and is definitely a priority for all Councillors. This budget commits to better delivery of services and to reviewing the cost of delivering those programs and services so they are provided as effectively and efficiently as possible. Citizens have clearly said in the Citizen Survey that they feel service delivery needs to be better for the taxes being paid.

Residents ranked roads and infrastructure as their highest concern in the Citizen Survey. The 2014 budget proposes the implementation of an enhanced Pavement Management Program for repair and replacement, an improved Quality Assurance Program for Capital Works to maintain standards of the work being performed and improved Project Implementation to ensure capital projects are completed on time.

This year, we see an increase in revenue of \$592,663 or 1.59%, mainly due to increased tax revenue while at the same time, we have seen a decrease in provincial revenue sharing of \$200,000. The cost of wages, which accounts for two-thirds of the City's operating budget, increased inflation and additional costs above inflation required to maintain programs and services such as power or increased equipment costs, added to an expenditure increase of 3.04%. With everything taken into account, this means the draft budget proposes a 2.52% increase.

We need to keep in mind that this is the budget that covers revenue and expenditures for the operation of services and provision programs by the City. Later, we will be reviewing and finalizing the capital budget where specific revenues will be designated to repair and rebuild infrastructure and develop projects across the City. Our intent throughout the budget, is to focus on providing the most effective and efficient service to the residents of Moose Jaw.

Deb Higgins
Mayor