



MEDIA RELEASE

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF FORT ERIE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: April 4, 2019

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Fort Erie Town Council Approves 2019 Budgets

The Town of Fort Erie Budget Committee concluded deliberations on March 5, 2019 and approved the 2019 General Levy Operating Budget, Capital Budget and Forecast, and Water and Wastewater Budgets.

General Levy Operating Budget

The 2019 General Levy Operating Budget was approved with an increase of 2.03 per cent and a total residential property tax bill increase of 2.00 per cent when combined with Niagara Region and the estimated education levies.

As Mayor Redekop stated “the focus this year has been continuing fiscal responsibility, ensuring that residents have the services that they need and ensuring the Fort Erie will remain competitive. We are making the investments necessary to make our community attractive to new residents and businesses and a place that we can all be proud of.”

The Town’s portion of the increase included:

- \$663,000 (2.50 per cent) to capital reserves to address the infrastructure deficit;
- \$240,000 (0.90 per cent) for staffing in areas related to asset management, fire administration and development coordination.
- \$145,000 (0.55 per cent) to increase service levels for rural ditching and storm water sediment cleaning.
- The budget includes grant contributions to the operations of the Fort Erie Public Library of \$1.5 million and the Economic Development Tourism Corporation (EDTC) of \$665,044.

The 2019 Operating Budget also includes several one-time requests that will be funded from strategic reserves. For example, \$400,000 was included for tree removal related to the Emerald Ash Borer devastation and \$312,000 to assist the Fort Erie Public Library with the Centennial Branch renovations that will create more efficient use of space for patrons including child friendly spaces.

“In addition to strategic spending, the Operating budget takes advantage of a number of revenue opportunities in 2019” said Jonathan Janzen, Treasurer. “Increases in tax

assessment growth, investment income and development fees all helped to mitigate tax increases.”

Capital Budget and Forecast

The Capital Budget consists of 59 projects with a total cost of \$14.2 million and include works related to roads, bridges, sidewalks, water, wastewater, and Fire and Emergency Services. Larger projects include \$4.1 million for the Lakeside Road watermain replacement, \$1.3 million for road resurfacing, \$1.2 million for the Highland Avenue sanitary sewer and road construction and \$1.1 million for bridge and culvert replacement.

Funding for these projects comes from a variety of sources including Town reserves, Federal Gas Tax, grants and Development Charges.

Water and Wastewater

The overall budget for water and wastewater for 2019 is \$18,931,399 which is an increase of \$734,662 or 4.04 per cent compared to 2018. This amount will increase an average monthly homeowner's bill by 3.98 per cent (\$4.59) based on a household that uses 16 m³ per month.

The increase includes the Town's net cost increase of 2.24 per cent and an increase in the Town's portion of the Niagara Region's treatment costs of 4.98 per cent.

“We have an obligation to provide consistent, safe and abundant clean water to our residents, businesses and visitors. We are doing that and also maintaining the infrastructure in our systems in the face of unsustainable Regional charges, which make up 60% of the bill paid by Fort Erie customers” said Mayor Wayne Redekop.

The Water and Wastewater Budget recovers costs by collecting 55 per cent of the average bill through base, or flat, monthly charges and 45 per cent from consumption rates. The base charge reflects costs that must be paid whether or not there are any water or sewage flows. This is due to the fixed nature of infrastructure required to deliver services and is impacted by a relatively low number of customers over a large geographical area in Fort Erie. The consumption charge is a variable cost that is directly related to the amount of treated water provided and includes labour, materials, and services such as electricity and chemicals.