



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 14, 2015

Town of Okotoks 2016 Budget

Town Council has approved the \$52.7 million 2016 Operating Budget. The 2016 budget will include a 1.6% municipal tax increase, meaning the owner of a typical home will pay approximately \$35 per year (\$2.92 per month) more in municipal taxes in the coming year.

The Town experienced 3% new assessment growth. The additional revenue from the new assessment growth enabled the Town to establish a lower tax rate and maintain service levels for our growing population. Maintaining current service levels due to growth includes additional roads and pathways, new playfields and streetlights, increased use of recreation facilities, increased residential and commercial customers, along with extraordinary inflationary pressures in new facility operating costs, utilities and protective services.

Current water and sewer rates will increase 3.3% to ensure continued cost recovery and for future utility infrastructure enhancements and upgrades.

Highlights of the operating budget include the following service enhancements:

- Enhanced Policing Services with 3 additional RCMP Officers for a total of 25 officers.
- Increase in the contribution due to the final phase of cost sharing with the MD of Foothills for the operation of Scott Seaman Sports Rink to enhance recreational opportunities for the community.
- Increased support for those in need, including increased grants to community non-profit agencies, adult and youth community development initiatives and continued provision of wheelchair accessible transportation for seniors and persons with disabilities through the Town's subsidized taxi transportation program.
- Modest funding to support start-up of the regional pilot transit program in fall 2016
- Major operating projects total \$5.8 million for lifecycle maintenance and infrastructure replacements and water license acquisitions to allow for continued growth.
- Updating the Cultural and Heritage Master Plan to plan for needs over the next 20 years.

Highlights of the \$14.8 million capital budget include the following major projects:

- Providing the utility services and the roadways to enable construction to begin on the Wedderburn educational, recreation and cultural campus in fall 2016.
- Upgrading of the Veterans Way pedestrian corridor (formerly Centre Ave).
- Equipment and fleet replacements.
- An expanded water spray park.

Councillor Tanya Thorn, Finance & Budget Chair, stated, "The F&B Committee has recommended a fiscally responsible budget that maintains investments in infrastructure and does not include any new debt. We have also put aside \$5.35M into savings from \$53 million in revenues, while servicing debt repayment of \$3M. Service levels for residents have been maintained and community safety enhanced."

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