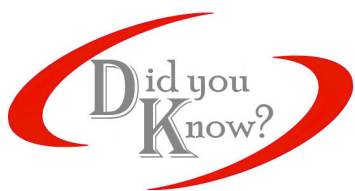


2020/21 Budget Highlights



The Town of Stratford will collect about 4.7 million dollars in property tax in 2020-21 which equates to \$2.77 per household per day or \$1.18 per person per day?!

For less than the cost of your daily cup of coffee, the Town provides residents with police protection, fire protection, facilities, parks, sport fields, sidewalks, trails, recreation and cultural programs, planning and development control, environmental protection and much more. When you compare this level of service to what you pay for it (and get) compared to other expenses in your life, we think it's a pretty good bargain. Municipalities deliver a wide range of services to residents within a limited, often stretched, budget.

The monthly cost of water and sewer, to ensure safe drinking water and the removal of wastewater from your household, works out to an average of \$62.65 per month per household.

Town of Stratford 2020/21 Budget Report

It is my pleasure to highlight the 2020/21 Town of Stratford Budget and provide you with an update on projects from the past year. We remain committed to being fiscally responsible with your tax dollars while also balancing the requests and expectations of residents for services and programs. Right now, our plans, like yours, are changing daily as we respond to and deal with the ongoing COVID-19 situation. It is an unprecedented situation, one which we won't fully know the impacts of for quite some time. We also want residents to understand that the budget is a longer view on the existing commitments and investments the Town of Stratford has made, and is making.

The Town continues to be impacted negatively by the revenue sharing change made in 2008 under the previous provincial government. The change to our revenue sharing model sees us with \$550,000 less revenue available to us this budget year alone. We recently made a proposal to the Province of PEI for a new revenue sharing model and remain optimistic that the current government will work with us for a more equitable solution. If we are not successful however we will be having a conversation with residents about whether you are willing to pay more for expanding programs, services and infrastructure to meet our community's growing needs, or are willing to reduce these levels in order to keep rates lower.

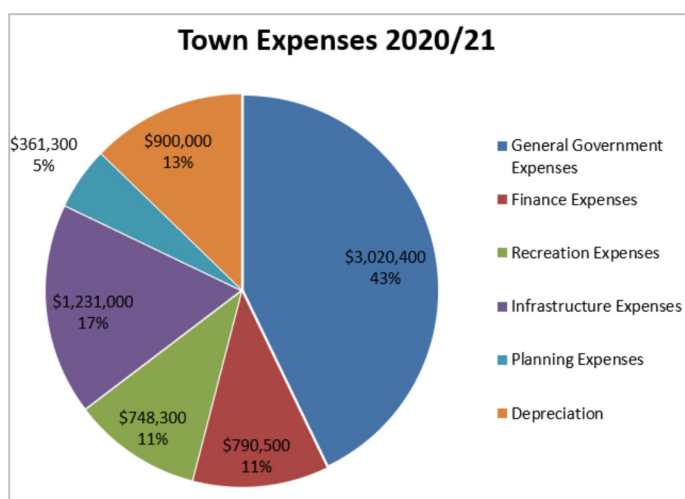
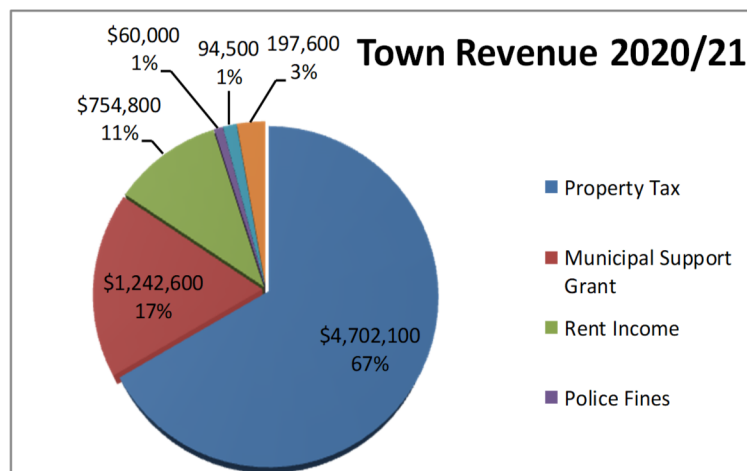
Over the past number of years the Town of Stratford has been absorbing increasing costs without raising taxes for residents. Last year significant cuts were made in order to balance the budget however in the current budget, an increase of one cent for residential customers (phased in over the next two years) is required. This equates to about a \$11 increase for the average assessed home in Stratford for the upcoming year. Through the 2020/21 budget, Mayor and Council have also implemented changes to our tax structure bringing it in line with those of Charlottetown and Cornwall. These changes allowed us to minimize the impact of tax increases to any one group and sees new tax groups created for non-residents of PEI. It also moves apartment buildings and hotels/motels from the residential rate to an apartment tax group and motel/hotel tax group. These, along with a commercial tax increase, will also be phased in over the next two years.

As we know, our community is a great one with many positive things happening - the Stratford Emergency Services Centre opening, a solution for our wastewater delivery system underway, additional staffing to be able to service our residents, and much more. We are building the best community possible!



Revenue and expenses

In the 2020/21 Town budget, we are forecasting revenue of \$7,051,600 which includes government transfers of \$1,242,000 and expenses of \$7,051,500, resulting in a surplus of \$100. Within the budget we have established a COVID-19 Contingency Fund. As these are unprecedented times, Council thought it prudent to establish this fund to deal with any number of issues the Town, our residents or businesses may face in the months ahead. At this time the fund includes \$38,000 available to be used towards the safety of our residents, helping those in need and/or to mitigate the economic impact on our business community. We encourage our residents to continue to *Think Stratford* ongoing.



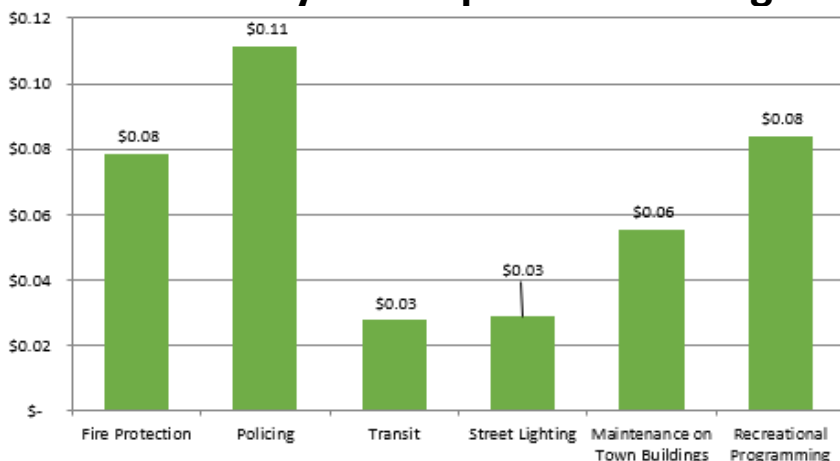
Your Stratford Town Council and staff continue to deliver exceptional value for your investment as a resident. The Town continues to view the health of our residents as a priority. Residents have use of the Town Centre recreation facility walking track and equipment free of charge, an extensive sidewalk and walking trail system and many parks and playing fields to be physically active on. Programming to encourage healthy lifestyles, personal development and cultural awareness are held throughout the year for a range of ages along with creative, personal interest and other workshops and classes.

Initiatives such as our RESPECT Road Safety program, Think Stratford support local and public art programming will be maintained through department budgets. Residents will continue to see Stratford as a forward thinking municipality.

We continue to make capital investments in our community including in active transportation through a combination of expanded trail grooming, and new sidewalks, multi-use paths and bike lanes. Some of these projects require a partnership with the Province of PEI who own and maintain the streets in our town. In 2020/21 we have budgeted to complete the bike lane on Keppoch Road and the sidewalk and bike lane on Georgetown Road subject to funding approval. This is an area of the Town which is highly requested to be completed and will make access to Tea Hill Park much easier and safer for our residents. The Town is also actively pursuing additional natural trails which often see us entering into an agreement with private landowners to provide these connections for residents over their property. We have had a number of very successful and positive relationships in the past to allow these to happen and we look forward to more positive conversations with other landowners in the future.



Where do my municipal tax dollars go?



Capital Budget

The budget for the Town of Stratford's 2020/21 capital items is \$4,317,900, which after infrastructure funding and other funding partners in the amount of \$3,288,100, will be a net cost \$1,029,800 to taxpayers. Included in this number is funding for Town capital including \$2,022,000 in New Deal Gas Tax Funding, \$1,206,100 in Investing in Canada funding and \$55,000 in other funding.

The Utility Capital Budget is \$8,068,100 of which the Town will receive infrastructure funding of \$4,818,800 from the Clean Water Wastewater Fund and \$1,102,900 from the Investing in Canada Fund for a net capital of \$2,146,400.

Stratford Emergency Services Centre

The newly opened Stratford Emergency Services Centre is now home to Cross Roads Fire Department, RCMP and Island EMS. Together from this facility they will be better able to serve both our community and the surrounding area. The building also has event space on the second floor available for rent to the public and is designed to serve our community for many years to come. With no infrastructure funding opportunities available to assist with the construction, except for about \$1 million of federal gas tax funds that we were able to reallocate for the energy efficiency and meeting space components of the building, the remaining cost of the building was paid for by our taxpayers. The building also comes with significant operational cost increases to the Town at an estimated \$400,000 per year. This amount includes increased fire dues, which on the residential side, have gone from \$66 per household per year to \$106 and on the commercial side from \$153 to \$609 per commercial unit. These dues are paid for from within the residential and commercial tax collected. While our plans for an official opening and open house for residents to see the space are currently on hold, we do look forward to this in the future.



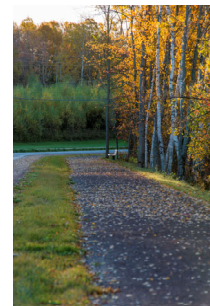
Integrated Town Software

The Town of Stratford is currently using multiple software systems to perform the various necessary functions of our day-to-day operations. These systems are not compatible from one department to another and in order to improve our overall efficiency the Town will be implementing a software system that will encompass all Town departments. This will be done in stages to allow staff the time to prepare for and transition to the new program. Much of the functionality will not be seen outwardly by residents however there will be some increased functionality coming including a move to optional e-billing beginning later this year. This new system will allow residents to set up an online account giving them access to their utility billing initially but further access to register for events or book meeting space will be rolled out in the future. Watch your April utility bills for more information about setting up your e-billing account.

Increased Staffing

As our community continues to grow so do the staffing requirements to be able to deliver the services and programming requested of us. The environment remains a top priority for residents and within the 2020/21 budget an environmental

coordinator position is planned. This position will carry out environmental initiatives for the Town of Stratford such as tree preservation, ecologically sensitive land preservation and stewardship, greenhouse gas emission reduction initiatives, watershed rehabilitation, and erosion and sediment control. The budget also includes the addition of casual maintenance staff to assist with frequently requested services such as evening sport field and trail maintenance in the summer and outdoor skating rink and trail grooming in the winter. As well there are also extended utility maintenance worker weeks required to respond to the Town's growing infrastructure maintenance needs.



Community Campus

The Town of Stratford is committed to co-locating facilities required for the previously announced high school by the Province of PEI. The land purchase will take place during the current budget year with a supplemental budget required at that time to do so as land purchase negotiations are currently underway. This property is an investment in our community that will be developed over a period of time to serve the future needs of our residents. Further consultations will be held with residents to determine the speed of development and priorities for the property as well as to look at the possible tax implications of these decisions.

Fullerton's Creek Conservation Park

Fullerton's Creek Conservation Park boasts 140 acres consisting of a mix of forest, field, stream and marshland. In 2013 the Town of Stratford purchased the property to protect the water supply at the Fullerton's Creek Well Field Site. Since then the municipal park has continued to be developed, with 4 kms of trails added, which are also groomed in the winter months as weather permits, to allow for year-round use. It also has a multi-use field and viewing platform overlooking Fullerton's Marsh. The park connects to the TransCanada Trail and offers a large parking lot. The 2020/21 capital budget contains additional money to build a washroom facility and natural playground on the site. The fall of 2019 saw an inaugural event take place in Fullerton's Creek Conservation Park with the first annual Fall Fest held in the Town of Stratford. This event saw many residents visiting Fullerton's Creek Conservation Park for the first time and was a great opportunity to showcase it. As the Covid-19 situation continues, we know many residents are practicing social distancing while still enjoying a walk here.



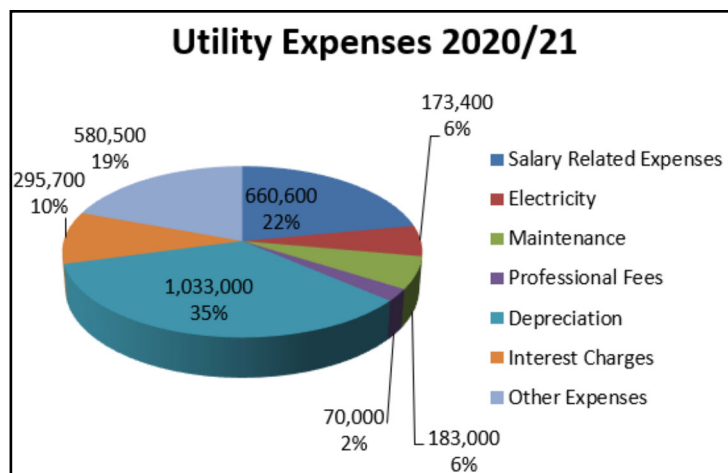
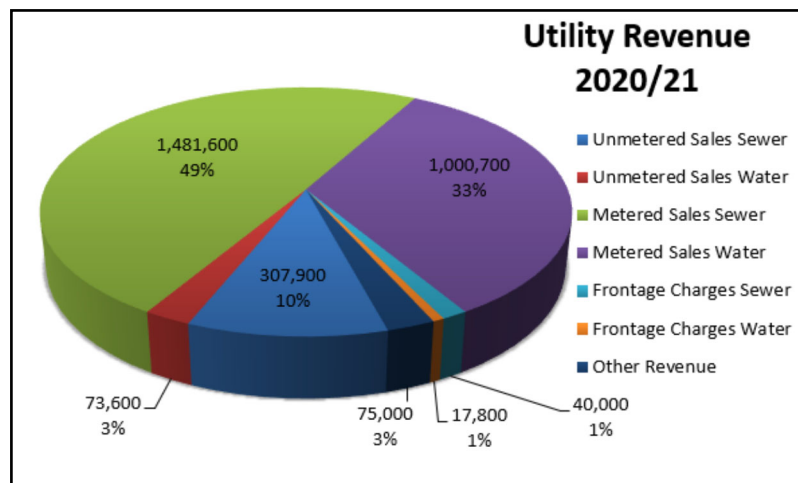
Utility Update

The Stratford Utility operates on a cash recovery basis and as such, the Town continually analyzes expenses to ensure that the rates for customers are equitable while being sufficient to meet our long term goals. Later this year will see the waste water delivery system come online with our sewage beginning to be piped to the Charlottetown Pollution Control Plant. While we won't know the full impact that this project will have on our rates until next year, we are being cautious at this time with our rate model runs to ensure that our costs are covered. To ensure that the Stratford Utility expenses are covered, the 2020/21 budget has an increase to water rates to a base rate of \$33.64 and a consumption rate of \$0.97/m³ and an increase to sewer rates to a base

rate of \$50.20 and a consumption rate of \$1.45/m³. To the average Stratford Utility customer, these increases combined amount to a total of \$31.45 for the upcoming year.

In 2020/21 the Utility budget shows \$2,996,600 in revenue, consisting primarily of metered and unmetered Utility customer rates.

The expenses are budgeted to be \$2,996,200 resulting in a surplus of \$400.



Water Audit Program

Earlier in 2020 the Town of Stratford and Stratford Area Watershed Improvement Group collaborated to provide Stratford Utility customers with a free in-home water audit. The program aims to teach residents how to read their water meter and check regularly for leaks in their home, to educate residents about how much water they are using and provide homeowners with recommendations on how to reduce their water consumption. As part of the program the Stratford Area Watershed Improvement Group will also undertake riparian buffer zone improvement work to protect and enhance freshwater and aquatic habitats by planting native tree and shrub species.

Water Metering

As residents are aware the Town of Stratford launched a universal water metering program in 2018 requiring all households and businesses serviced by the Stratford Utility to install a water meter. To date, 94% of properties have had their water meter installed, an amazing accomplishment which we as a community should be very proud of. As new developments come online in the Town, our staff remain vigilant ensuring that all properties have their water meter installed. The water metering program has resulted in a 10% reduction in overall water usage during the past year. This will reduce pumping rates and extend the lifespan of our current wellfields. We encourage residents to continue with sustainable practices to preserve this important resource.



Closing

In closing let me assure you that this budget was not an easy one for us as your Town representatives. You have put your trust in us and given us the responsibility to act on your behalf. To that end we have made the decisions required to balance the budget and we have looked dutifully at all aspects of the budget. We greatly appreciate the input of residents through our earlier draft budget process and remain committed to working with you through the ongoing COVID-19 situation. We will get through this together.

Respectfully submitted,
Gail MacDonald, Chair Finance & Technology

