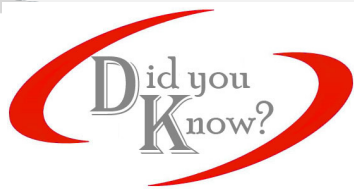




2023/24 Budget Highlights



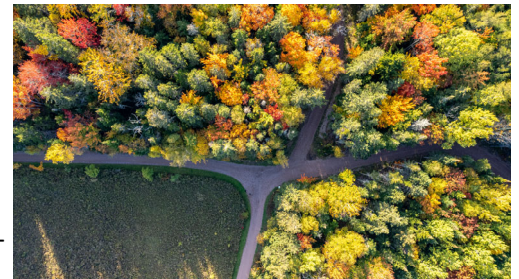
After a couple of years pumping the Town's sewage to the Charlottetown Pollution Control Plant, residents and commercial users continue to embrace and support our water conservation efforts. Despite new development growth in the Town and increased connections to our water and sewer systems, the overall volume of sewage treated at the plant is once again less than anticipated. As of the end of 2022, our usage averages 166 cubic meters per household, a reduction from an average of 172 cubic meters at the end of 2021. Please continue to be mindful of how much liquid is leaving your home and entering our system, making changes where you can - every drop saved counts! Consider using that leftover water in your cup to water a plant, shorten your shower time by a minute or two, and check that your sump pump isn't illegally connected to the Town's sewer system.

On behalf of your newly elected Stratford Town Council, it is my pleasure to bring forward some highlights from the 2023/24 Town of Stratford Budget. This budget contains no tax increases to either residential or commercial rates, and only a modest increase in our Stratford Utility charges to cover for inflationary expense increases we are incurring.

As we have mentioned before however, the Town of Stratford continues to face significant pressure from growth. Growth, over time, can lead to increased revenue for the Town but in the short term, periods of growth put pressure on our finances. The Town is required to deliver expanded services including water and sewer infrastructure, trails and sidewalks, increased recreational and cultural programming, and police and fire protection, among others, in order for the growth to occur.

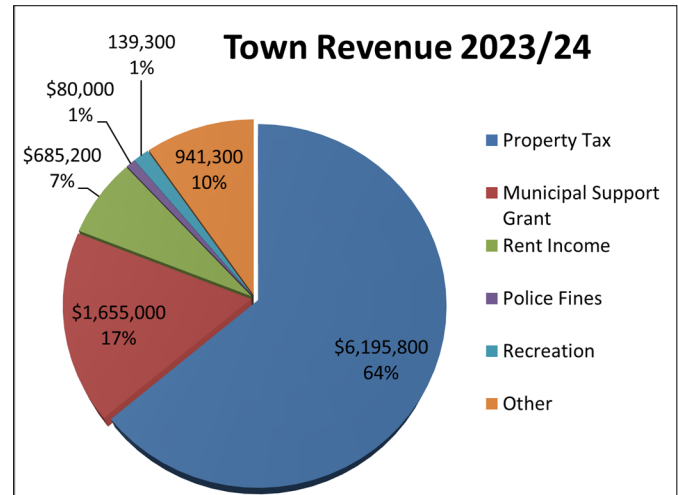
The Town has been working alongside fellow municipalities, through the Federation of PEI Municipalities, to negotiate an increase to the current revenue sharing agreement with the Province of PEI. These funds are necessary to allow communities like ours to deliver the services and programs to our residents which we are responsible for through the Municipal Government Act, and more importantly, which we want to be able to provide to you. We remain optimistic that following the election a fresh approach can be found which will provide a long-term model that is predictable, stable and fair.

We recognize that we have a lot to celebrate in Stratford - a community of like-minded individuals who value our increasing diversity and culture alongside our history, who appreciate our natural environment and enjoy the growing active transportation connections we are making, and who are willing to engage with us and participate in various opportunities to provide feedback, thoughts and ideas. Our community is special, and though it is growing and ever-changing, finding the right balance remains our commitment. We are always listening and looking out for the best interests of both our current and future residents. We are truly building the best community possible!

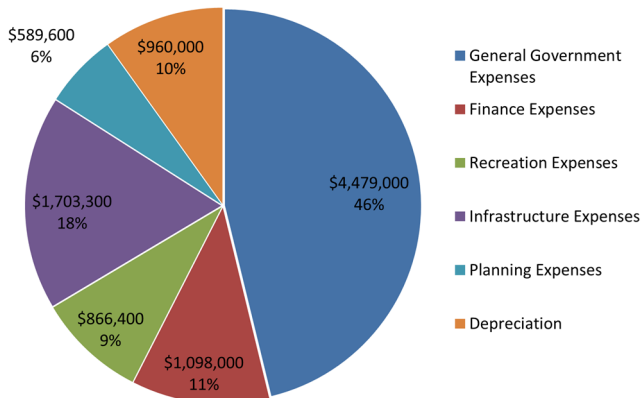


Revenue and Expenses

The 2023/24 Town of Stratford budget forecasts revenue of \$9,696,600, which includes government transfers of \$1,655,000 and expenses of \$9,696,300, resulting in a surplus of just \$300. Like all Island municipalities, the Town of Stratford is limited in the sources of revenue available and, relying primarily on property taxes, utility charges and fees to pay for our services and infrastructure. While there are no tax increases for the coming budget year, our ability to maintain, and particularly to expand or offer additional services, programming and infrastructure, is limited. As with the previous council, the current council remains committed to being fiscally responsible with your tax dollars while also balancing the needs of our community.



Town Expenses 2023/24



Our 2023/24 budget includes continued investment in our community through priorities important to you - parks and green spaces, active transportation, tree planting and forest management planning, climate change mitigation, and more.

As we are all experiencing in our personal lives, so too is the Town of Stratford feeling the impacts of inflation. We continue to see many of our goods and services rise across our operational and capital expenses. Though we have been allocating for increases, it has certainly had an effect on our available funds and the overall costs to deliver services and programming as well as on infrastructure.



Capital Budgets

The Town's capital budget is \$21,506,600 which after infrastructure funding and other

funding partners in the amount of \$15,660,300, will have a net cost of \$5,846,300. Funding for Town capital includes \$1,021,200 in New Deal Gas Tax Funding, \$12,204,400 in Investing in Canada funding and \$2,434,700 in other funding.

The Utility Capital Budget is \$6,106,000 of which the Town will receive infrastructure funding of \$1,058,700 from Municipal Strategic Component Funding, \$1,073,600 from the Investing in Canada Fund, and \$400,600 in other funding for a net capital of \$3,573,100.



The Town of Stratford was awarded \$1.1M through CMHC's Housing Supply Challenge for an 18-month project with a goal of finding solutions around barriers to new housing supply. By working together and having conversations in our community, we can identify and close gaps, and create goals to achieve suitable housing for all.

Current zoning in Stratford, and other Island municipalities, necessitates a high frequency of council consideration of zoning and approvals, which most often result in adversarial public meetings on development projects. There is a systemic challenge built into the existing process in building public and council support for projects that increase density due to the values associated with traditional patterns of low-density development.

Get involved, learn more and stay informed at:
shape.townofstratford.ca

Community Campus

Tenders have been issued for the site servicing work which will get underway later this spring on the Community Campus lands. This is an exciting time as the first phase of work gets underway on this multi-phase, multi-year project. An application has been submitted for funding to begin developing the recreational and cultural infrastructure on the property, and if successful, could see design work later this year. The Town continues to have many positive conversations with a variety of organizations expressing interest in becoming partners with the Town of Stratford. We will continue to work with these groups where possible for the development of recreational and cultural infrastructure on the Community Campus.



The Stratford Community Campus Master Plan was released last spring and is available to the public on the Town's website. It includes a site plan with elements and amenities laid out in accordance with their relationship to one another, and showing where the roads, water and sewer services, electrical and communication services, stormwater infrastructure, and active transportation infrastructure will be located, following the natural topography to the extent possible. The plan also includes a phasing scheme to enable the campus to be developed in an orderly fashion, however funding opportunities and community needs may also dictate the development.

This property will become a focal point of our community in the future and will include the previously announced high school by the Province of PEI, which is expected to begin in the coming construction year. In time, the Community Campus will provide Stratford residents with a recreational, cultural and social hub that will provide physical, social and mental health benefits.

Michael Thomas Waterfront Park



Stratford residents and visitors can soon expect to see the first phase of the new park on our waterfront begin with the installation of a boardwalk to allow residents to access this space.

The connection to Charlottetown

from the boardwalk across the active transportation lane on the Hillsborough Bridge will bring opportunity for further development of the commercial lands around the waterfront park.

Community Energy Plan

With further information to be released in the near future, including the full report, residents will be pleased to know that previously set out targets in the Town's Community Energy Plan have been met earlier than scheduled. We will be working this year to update and set new targets for the future.



Pondside Watershed Restoration

Though delayed following hurricane cleanup efforts this past fall, 2023 will see the work continued to restore the Pondside Watershed. Work will include the dredging both Moore's and Kelly's ponds, and the rehabilitation of the wetland and buffer zones surrounding the ponds. Town staff, council and residents are excited to see this project funded and moving forward.

Investments in Staffing Resources

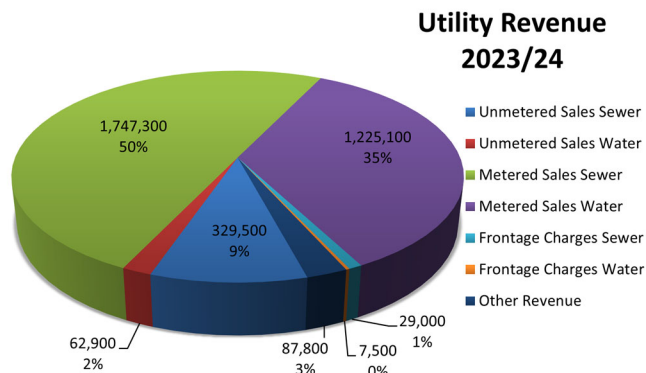
As the Town of Stratford continues to grow, some identified staffing resource investments are once again being made in the upcoming year. The Town of Stratford budget includes the continuation of a 36 week position in the Planning Department of a Planning and Development Technician, a full time planner position to work under our existing planner for succession planning, and a 50% position for administrative support.

Other Highlights

- Expansion of the transit system
- Core area development and potential zoning changes
- Installation in further active transportation including a paved multi-use path on Kinlock Road from JK Beauty Lane to the TCH
- Sustainable developments for splash pad
- Solar panel installation at Stratford Emergency Services Centre (subject to funding)
- Purchase of a new electric vehicle to add to the Town's fleet
- Implementation of additional supports identified in the first annual business survey and other consultations
- Completion of a Town organizational review
- Increase to the Stratford Youth Centre operational budget
- Outdoor rink liner for Bunbury Rink
- Additional professional fees to help the Planning Department with the development of potential short-term rental and food vendor bylaws
- Expansion of parking lot at Cotton Park
- Renewable upgrades for Town buildings

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 among our customers, while being sufficient to meet our long term needs. With rising inflationary expense increases over the past year, a modest increase to the base rate of water and sewer rates is required. The combined increase to the base rate amounts to a quarterly increase of \$13.85, based on the single family dwelling rate, or \$55.40



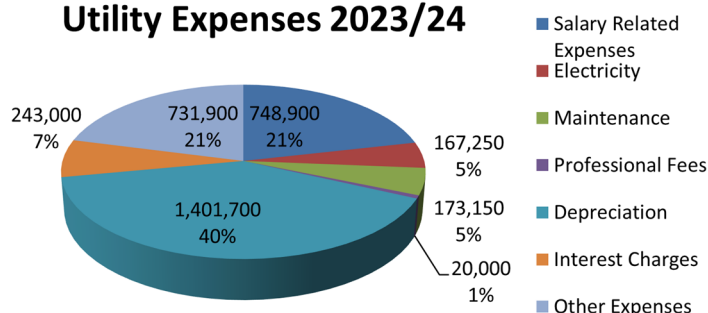
annually. Stratford Utility customers continue to demonstrate their support by limiting their personal use of water where possible, and supporting conservation methods and programs.

The past year saw the former lagoon site backfilled and landscaped. This project remains exciting for our Town and will allow us to develop much needed park space on our waterfront. This site will be green with grass this coming spring for the first time since 1980.

The 2023/24 Stratford Utility budget includes \$3,489,100 in revenue, consisting primarily of metered and unmetered Utility customer rates. The expenses are budgeted to be \$3,485,900 resulting in a surplus of \$3,200.

Further budget investments include construction of an additional water reservoir tower to supply domestic water and provide further fire protection for our growing community, as well as upgrades to the Corish sewage pump station and forcemain, with the ultimate goal to redirect the Corish station flows away from the Pondside station and into the gravity trunk main instead. The completion of upgrades to the Bunbury sewage pumping station to accommodate the current and future growth in that area will also take place with tenders issued in the near future.

Utility Expenses 2023/24



The 2023/24 budget year will see the Utility continuing to implement the inflow and infiltration reduction program as a means to minimize the amount of water entering the sewer system that does not require treatment. Given that we are now pumping our sewage to Charlottetown, this work is even more important to complete, and will reduce the amount of surface and groundwater seeping into the sewer system. The Utility continues to monitor and review the sewer system to identify areas that require attention and repairs. In 2022, we have been able to rehabilitate 205 meters of sewer by using innovative technology where the existing pipe was lined through manhole access with no excavation work required.

Closing

In closing, on behalf of all members of Council, I first would like to thank our Town staff for their ongoing efforts. I can assure you they are working hard for you every day, and are mindful of the budgets set forth and any expenses incurred. Secondly I would like to thank my fellow council members for their hard work and committed learning curve as for many of us this is our first budget together. Finally, I would like to thank our great residents - your trust in us to make the right decisions, no matter how tough, on your behalf is not



something we take for granted.

You should be proud of the work undertaken in this budget, and in our wonderful community. There are a great many things to be proud of and to celebrate about, and in, our community. Please take advantage of the opportunities to have your voice included as they arise through the Town's various engagement efforts, and get involved in community life—you help make it better!

Respectfully submitted,
Ron Dowling, Chair of Finance & Technology