

City's proposed budget maintains service levels, restrains growth in operating costs

Release of online budget starts deliberation process

The City's proposed 2016-2018 Operating Budget would maintain all City programs and services for just over \$6 per day in municipal property taxes for the typical household. Administration released the City's first multi-year Operating Budget online to give City Council and Edmontonians time to review budget details before deliberations begin in late November.

"We believe the proposed balanced budget delivers good value for the range and quality of municipal programs, services and infrastructure the City delivers," says Todd Burge, the City's Chief Financial Officer. "This budget demonstrates how the City is being a prudent fiscal manager while meeting its commitments to provide the programs, services and infrastructure that Edmontonians need and use every day."

4.9 per cent tax increase proposed, operations limited to 2.5 per cent

The City of Edmonton's proposed 2016-2018 Operating Budget recommends a 4.9 per cent general property tax increase in 2016 for all civic operations. Similar increases are proposed for the budgets in the second and third years. The proposed budget holds the tax increase for all civic operations to 2.5 per cent.

The remainder of the tax increase is made up of 2 per cent to support prior infrastructure commitments, such as hiring firefighters to staff a new fire station; 1.5 per cent dedicated to the Neighbourhood Renewal Program; 0.8 per cent to operate and maintain the future LRT Valley Line; and 0.9 per cent for growth projects available to Council for re-allocation to priority projects. The increase in budget expenditures is forecast to be offset by new revenue from additional properties, valued at \$38.7 million or equivalent to a 2.8 per cent reduction in the tax increase.

The proposed budget would mean an increase of \$109 in 2016, \$114 in 2017 and \$120 in 2018 for the typical household, which is a single-family dwelling with an assessed value of \$401,000.

"The proposed 2016-2018 Operating Budget allows us to maintain services and allows us to catch up to the dramatic growth we experienced the last number of years," says Burge. "At the same time, due to Alberta's economic uncertainty, we have restrained base operating costs through efficiency measures, internal program improvements, and prioritization of programs."

The City's efforts to find efficiencies and innovation has identified \$29.9 million in operating savings or cost avoidance for 2016. Of that, \$10.1 million is being made available for Council to reallocate to areas of greater priority.

Examples of cost savings efficiencies include: a bus scheduling program that will reduce the need for up to 49 buses on regular routes, meaning the City will not have to purchase additional buses (at a cost of \$27 million) to serve suburban growth areas; savings of \$112,500 by changing renewal of the Leisure Access Pass to every two years instead of annually, which also creates more convenience for low-income Edmontonians accessing recreation centres; and using digital and online forms to reduce the amount of paper (up to 540,000 sheets a year) needed to file assessment complaints.

Budget input and deliberations

Edmontonians are encouraged to learn about the budget by visiting YEGcityBudget.ca. Interested residents and organizations are invited to provide input to Council at a November 23 public hearing. Residents can register to present to Council by calling the City Clerk at 780-496-8178 or by registering online at edmonton.ca/meetings. A Budget survey is also available online until November 14 at edmontonbudget.com.

The proposed budget is the first step in Council's deliberation process in setting the 2016-2018 Operating Budget. City Administration will formally present the budget to City Council on November 3. Following the public hearing on November 23, Council deliberations will start on November 27. Final approval of the Operating Budget, along with the Utilities Budget, is expected by mid-December. The budget and schedule can be found online at edmonton.ca/budget2016.

For more information:

Proposed 2016-2018 Operating Budget: edmonton.ca/budget2016
Overview and Budget Primer: YEGcityBudget.ca
Budget Survey Tool: EdmontonBudget.com

[Background](#)

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