

2015 Budget shows continued focus on core priorities

For many of us, this time of year is focused on a word whose inevitability has become a truism – taxes. Those of us involved in developing the budget for the Town of Gibsons see a decision involving taxes as one of the final steps in that process.

This year, after several weeks of budget deliberations and a number of public meetings, we have determined that a 5% increase in municipal taxes is required for 2015. Of that amount, 2% can be attributed to inflation, while 3% will be dedicated to maximizing, improving and, where necessary, replacing the Town's assets.

Again this year, our focus during budget development has been on improving efficiencies; maintaining our infrastructure; and protecting our assets. We have strived to attribute sufficient resources to ensure our infrastructure meets current and future needs, while working within our resources to protect our core assets, and to improve the Town's assets on an incremental basis.

We will continue to invest in maintaining our infrastructure, such as water, sewers and roads, although we will not be in a position to take on any new projects. In Gibsons, each one per cent tax increase brings in only about \$25 thousand, clearly not sufficient to address every need, and yet, as we clearly recognize, significant to our taxpayers. As well, effective April 1, water and sewer rates will increase by 11.3% and 8%, respectively.

These increases are intended to raise sufficient revenue to properly operate, maintain and replace water and sewer assets; to fairly distribute costs among utility system users; and over time, to achieve our ultimate goal of financial sustainability for the water and sewer utilities.

The question before us remains, what is the accepted level of service which our community is able to afford, recognizing that we cannot afford to have every asset at the highest level all the time. Only through meaningful conversations with our community can we learn the answer to that question.

I thank those of you who have attended public meetings related to our budget, and those of you who demonstrate your interest in our Town's affairs by attending Council meetings, or communicating with us via email, letters or in person.