

Mayors Message – May 2017

For many weeks, Council has been working with staff to finalize the Town's 2017 budget. For those of you who received notice of significant increases in the assessed value of your property, it will come as no surprise that taxes will also increase. We have been able to keep this relatively modest, however, the Town's portion of your tax bill this year will increase by 3% percent. Half of this amount will help address inflation, while the other half will be allocated to a reserve fund for future asset replacement. As prudent as it is to create this fund for the replacement of aging infrastructure, we recognize that the \$80,000 we can allocate from this year's tax revenue is a very modest amount for this important purpose.

The increase in residential assessments has one important implication for our taxpayers; it affects the Town's share of the SCRD budget. Here is one way to look at it: each year, Gibsons must pay its slice of the SCRD budget 'pie'; with the increase in assessments being particularly dramatic in Gibsons, our slice of the 'pie' becomes proportionately larger. So in addition to the 3% percent mentioned earlier, local taxpayers will pay an additional 1.5%, comprising the additional charge by SCRD and increases to other agencies such as the School District and Police taxes. The overall average residential tax will increase by 4.5% percent for an average house in Gibsons, assessed at \$472,000.

While residential properties increased 30% percent, commercial properties increased less dramatically at 15% percent and thus will see an average tax increase of less than 1% percent. Other increases will be required to our utility rates. Water will be, on average, up by 5 per cent, and sewer will have an average increase of 6% percent. The garbage collection fee will remain the same.

Taxes are not a favourite topic of conversation, especially when they include necessary increases – so, lest you think all is doom and gloom, it's important to bear in mind some of the important improvements planned for 2017. Thanks to recently received grants, Council now has the opportunity to approve the completion of a multi-use pathway up Gibsons Way, linking Upper and Lower Gibsons; renovations to the land portion of Armour's Beach, while working with other community partners to attract additional funds to improve the beach overall, with work to begin in late 2017; and more mundane but vitally important work to improve and increase the integrity of our water lines.

More exciting news lies ahead, as we marry Federal 'Canada 150' grant with Town of Gibsons funds to support our work with the Sea Cavalcade team, the Coast Cultural Alliance and the Gibsons Jazz Society on major celebrations for this summer. Please check the Town's website in coming weeks to learn more about what lies in store for you, your friends and families.