



**Town of Paradise Budget Speech 2017**

**Councillor Deborah Quilty**

**Chair, Finance Committee**

**December 6, 2016**

**PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

Good evening Your Worship, fellow Councillors, Town staff, members of the media. Tonight as Chair of the Finance Committee it is my pleasure to present the 2017 Budget for the Town of Paradise.

As we started our budget preparations, we took a moment to look back on our 2016 work. The past year has been an exciting one for our Town – Paradise Fire Station No. 8 opened its doors, Metrobus rolled into Town, Automated Garbage Collection was implemented, and Paradise Park officially opened; all this in addition to our on-going programs and services in all departments. We are indeed a busy Town!

Your Worship and fellow Councillors, this hard work has not gone unnoticed. Throughout the past year, the Town was honoured to receive several awards and recognitions from a variety of organizations. The Salvation Army presented us with the “Friends of the Army” award for the Town’s support in helping the organization fulfill its mission and mandate. We received the 2016 Bridging the Gap award from Recreation NL for our efforts in accessibility and inclusiveness. Easter Seals Newfoundland and Labrador also recognized the Town for our work in those areas, in particular for “creating an accessible and inclusive atmosphere for sports and activities.”

The Town of Paradise also received a 2016 Tidy Towns award and a 2016 Economic Developers Association of Canada Marketing Award for online community outreach. This fall, the Paradise Double Ice Complex received LEED® Silver certification from the Canada Green Building Council.

It is an honour to receive such acknowledgements and they are a testament to the hard work and dedication of all employees with the Town of Paradise. Our employees work tirelessly to make our Town a great place in which to live and work, and it is wonderful to see the efforts recognized.

In turning to the year ahead, our planning started by seeking feedback from our residents. We launched pre-budget consultations in the form of an online survey. This was the second year for the consultations and again we were very pleased that residents took the time to provide their input to us.

Through the survey, our residents have told us that they want us to maintain reasonable property taxes and to continue with improvements to road and transportation infrastructure. They also told us that they want the Town’s programs and services to continue. We extend sincere thanks to all those who completed the survey and forwarded comments to the Town.

As a Council, we understand the need to balance the provisions of programs and services within a reasonable level of taxation. We have carefully examined the needs of our Town. We have analyzed our available revenues. We have given considerable thought to the financial course that’s needed for our Town for the year ahead.

In this regard Your Worship, I am proud to present the Town of Paradise balanced 2017 Budget of \$36.6 million – one that maintains our residential mil rate of 6.8 and continues to offer our current level of services and programs to our residents. There are also no changes to the water and sewer rate or to the commercial mil rate.

We have worked hard to present a fair and balanced budget for the Town and maintain the full range of programs and services our residents expect and deserve.

One such service area is our road infrastructure. Transportation and infrastructure continues to be a top priority for our residents, and it is certainly a focus for us on Council. We understand the need for a solid transportation system in the Town of Paradise. Over the past number of years we have made significant investments to develop, enhance, and improve our road infrastructure and we have a transportation plan guiding us in that work. One such project has been the widening of Topsail Road. In 2016 we started the final phase of that project and it is scheduled to be completed this coming summer.

Budget 2017 contains allocations for continued road work and infrastructure improvements. We are investing \$360,000 for traffic light sequencing at three intersections along Topsail Road: McNamara Drive, Paradise Road and Karwood Drive, and at the crosswalks on McNamara Drive. We are also investing \$900,000 for work on Sunvalley Drive and we will continue with our annual road maintenance and upgrading throughout the Town.

An important part of transportation in any municipality is public transit. Last year we launched the Metrobus pilot project, and I am pleased to note that we are seeing steady increases in ridership month over month. The most current figures for the month of October show a ridership of 940. Council was proud to support this initiative to bring a public transit option to our Town.

Based on the results to date, Budget 2017 contains a further investment in Metrobus to expand the pilot project to include a Saturday route. The current Monday to Friday commuter route will continue and early in the new year the Saturday route will be added to the schedule. We are working with Metrobus to finalize the details of the expansion and we will announce the start date in the coming weeks.

Your Worship, our residents have access to a number of facilities, parks and amenities throughout our Town. This summer we officially opened Paradise Park, our newest recreation area which offers an accessible playground, concession stand, splash pad, dog parks and beach volley ball courts. The community stage is nearing completion and with Winter just around the corner, the arrival of snow transforms the area into the community sliding hill. It is certainly the flagship of our recreational facilities, and Budget 2017 contains \$155,000 for continued enhancements to that area including trees, signage and a gate.

In 2017, we will be upgrading the clubhouse at the Dianne Whalen Soccer Complex. The federal government is contributing to this project. We will also be installing skate park equipment at the playground on Camelot Crescent.

The coming year will also see the new St. Thomas Community Centre completed. This Centre holds special significance for our Town, and like all of us on Council, our residents and community groups are eagerly awaiting the completion of this new facility. We look forward to hosting an official opening when it is ready.

Your Worship, in 2017 we will allocate \$5.2 million to upgrade our wastewater treatment plant. These upgrades are needed to ensure that our Town is in compliance with the federal wastewater regulations. The Town received funding under a federal – provincial cost-shared agreement and this work would not be possible without that support. We thank the Government of Canada and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador for this investment in our Town.

The Town of Paradise is a vibrant municipality and all of us on Council are proud to offer our residents the best of urban and community living. And we are proud to do so within a balanced budget, one that maintains our tax rates and provides our residents with the right programs and services. Your Worship, Budget 2017 is focused on continuing our course and meeting the needs of our residents. As Chair of the Finance Committee, I extend sincere thanks to Council and senior staff for their considerable efforts to prepare Budget 2017 and I look forward to working together in the year ahead.

“BE IT RESOLVED that the Town of Paradise, in accordance with Section 77(1) of the Municipalities Act, adopt the 2017 Budget with operating revenues and expenditures totalling \$36,658,510.”

“BE IT RESOLVED that the Town of Paradise adopt the 2017 Schedule of Tax Rates as submitted.”

“BE IT RESOLVED that the Town of Paradise adopt the 2017 Fee Schedules as submitted.”