



**Town of Paradise Budget Speech 2016**

**Councillor Deborah Quilty**

**Chair, Finance Committee**

**December 15, 2015**

**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 2016 Budget for the Town of Paradise.

Over the past number of weeks, Council has been working diligently with senior staff to prepare the Town's budget. Our focus has been on striking the right balance – continuing to provide services and programs for our residents while being prudent fiscal managers. We want to ensure that every dollar we spend is done so in a responsible manner to meet the needs of our Town.

Tonight I am pleased to present the Town of Paradise 2016 balanced operating budget of \$35.6 million.

This year, for the first time as part of our budget preparations we conducted pre-budget consultations with residents in the form of an online survey. We wanted to hear directly from our residents about their views and ideas for the priorities for the coming year.

There was great interest in the process and we are very pleased with the input. Overwhelmingly, residents told us that they are concerned with property taxes and improved road infrastructure in the Town of Paradise. We extend sincere thanks to all residents who took the time to complete the survey. The information received from pre-budget consultations was used and considered as we prepared the 2016 Budget.

It was certainly no surprise to any of us on Council that property taxes and mil rates were the top concern for our residents. Therefore we are pleased to announce that we are reducing the residential mil rate from 7.4 to 6.8. This rate is among the lowest in the region. We are also continuing to offer a 10 percent seniors' discount on property tax.

In Budget 2016, we are also maintaining the water and sewer rate, the lowest in the region, despite increases in the amount the Town pays for the regional service. We are also maintaining the current commercial mil rate.

Your Worship, despite increased costs for regional services, we are able to lower the residential mil rate, present a balanced budget, and offer enhanced public services for our residents.

One area for enhanced services is the opening of the New Fire Hall. Council and residents are eagerly awaiting the completion. It is scheduled to be operational in June 2016. At that time we will become full members of the St. John's Regional Fire Services and as such will be required to contribute our share to the operations. For 2016 that cost will be \$2.8 million, an increase of \$2 million from 2015. With the new fire hall operational residents will have improved fire response in the Town. We are proud to be able to offer this service in Paradise.

We are also moving to improve garbage collection services for the Town of Paradise. In 2016 we are investing \$2 million to fully implement automated garbage collection throughout the Town. We anticipate that the new service will begin Summer 2016. Once implemented, residents will simply wheel plastic bins out for collection, eliminating the need to cover garbage with blankets and nets. The bins are emptied using a mechanical arm on the truck, which eliminates the need for workers to lift and haul the garbage. It allows for a clean, safe and efficient waste collection process. We will communicate all the details and information to residents well in advance of the program roll-out.

Your Worship, tonight we are pleased to announce an exciting public transit pilot project for the Town of Paradise. We are partnering with Metrobus to offer a commuter service for our Town. The pilot project will begin in June 2016 with an investment of \$120,000.

We are still finalizing the details of the project with Metrobus and will communicate the information to residents when it is finalized. The pilot project will be based on user demand – if our residents avail of the service and the passenger volumes are sufficient, then the Town will explore continued investment in the service.

Budget 2016 contains \$1.2 million for the completion of the Splashpad, dog park, concession stand and other outdoor amenities adjacent to the Paradise Double Ice Complex. These are features our residents have told us they want and we are pleased to invest in these projects. When this area is completed, the end of Sarah Davis Way will truly be a cornerstone of our community.

In 2016 we are also planning to replace the playground equipment at Elgin Place, install a Tot Lot playground on Atlantica Drive, and complete enhancements to the Adams Pond Trail. We are fortunate to have nature right at our doorstep here in our great Town. It is one of the shining features of Paradise. We are proud to invest in all areas of our Town for the enjoyment of residents.

Road infrastructure remains a top priority for residents and for all of us on Council. We understand the need for improved roads throughout the Town of Paradise, and we have a 10-year traffic plan to help achieve this goal.

Next year, we will invest over \$8 million for several road initiatives in the Town. This work includes the ongoing widening of Topsail Road, St. Thomas Line, and Paradise Road, including a roundabout at the intersection of Paradise Road and St. Thomas Line. We are also planning upgrades to Acharya Drive, Kenora Place and Pleasantview Avenue. We are also continuing our water and sewer work in the Town and in 2016 we will invest \$2.8 million for various projects.

The fourth elementary school for our community is under construction and is anticipated to open in September 2016. In addition, the Newfoundland and Labrador English School Board is planning for a new intermediate school and a new high school for Paradise. With our growing population, and young demographic, we need these new schools. We want to support our community schools and in Budget 2016 we have allocated funds to purchase an additional sidewalk tractor so that we are prepared to clear the sidewalks around all the schools in our Town during the winter season.

Next year will also see the start of a significant infrastructure project as we begin construction on the new St. Thomas Line Community Centre. This Centre holds particular significance for our Town and we are pleased to be moving forward with construction by allocating \$1.3 million.

Your Worship, the Town of Paradise remains a growing and vibrant municipality, a place where residents and all of us on Council are proud to call home. As a Council, we are committed to providing the best possible services and programs while ensuring responsible spending that will have long-term benefits for our Town. We have worked hard to achieve just that in Budget 2016.

As Chair of the Finance Committee, I extend sincere thanks to Council and senior staff for their considerable efforts to prepare Budget 2016 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 2016 Budget with operating revenues and expenditures totalling \$35,601,236.”

“BE IT RESOLVED that the Town of Paradise adopt the 2016 Schedule of Tax Rates as submitted.”

“BE IT RESOLVED that the Town of Paradise adopt the 2016 Fee Schedules as submitted.”