



Budget Talks 2023  
What We Heard

November 2022

## Introduction

Each year the Town conducts a public engagement process as it develops its annual budget. Budget Talks is a multi-faceted engagement exercise to gather meaningful input from residents, community groups, and businesses to help Council strike the right balance of services, programs, and infrastructure available within the current fiscal situation.

Budget Talks 2023 was launched on September 16 and closed on October 11, 2022. It involved Council Pop-ups, a Twitter Town Hall, email / social media input, an Online Survey, and outreach to the local Chambers of Commerce.

## Council Pop-ups

Members of Council hosted in-person Council Pop-ups at four locations throughout the Town, Adam's Pond Trail (October 2), the Paradise Double Ice Complex (October 5), No Frills Grocery (October 6), and Hamilton's Store (October 8). The sessions gave residents an opportunity to talk directly with Council members about budget priorities and to share their suggestions on an idea board. Overall, feedback received during the Council Pop-ups focused on the following areas:

- Request for a swimming pool
- Traffic calming measures
- Maintain / lower taxes
- Need for high school
- Address traffic concerns / issues
- Additional access points into Town
- Water and sewer improvements
- Road improvements
- Trail maintenance
- Accessible Transit Program

## Twitter Town Hall

Mayor Dan Bobbett hosted a Twitter Town Hall on September 27. The Mayor responded to suggestions and questions as part of our Budget 2023 preparations. He provided Twitter users with an opportunity to ask their biggest budget questions. Over 40 people participated in the Twitter Town Hall and the input received focused on the following areas:

- Reduce or maintain the tax rate
- Sidewalks on Topsail Rd and St. Thomas Line
- Speed bumps / traffic calming
- Expand public transit access
- Water and sewer upgrades
- Continued development and expansion of trailways
- Improve pedestrian safety especially in school zones.
- Need for swimming pool
- ATV and Dirt Bike track or trails
- Investment into the boathouse
- New high school
- More ways in and out of Paradise to reduce traffic

## Engagement Email & Social Media Comments

Feedback was also received from residents, community groups and businesses directly through email and social media comments / direct messages. We engaged with sports associations, community groups, and residents directly through the engagement email and social media pages to determine their needs for Budget 2023.

- Implementation of an annual asphalt crack seal preventive maintenance program;
- Prioritize identifying and filling potholes, even in winter
- Increase annual street rehab budget and asphalt maintenance.
- Increase sidewalk snow clearing
- New street sweeper needed & expand areas
- Beautify greenspace area on Topsail Rd.
- Trenton Drive Improvements
- Improve accessibility of Neil's Pond Trail (surface not accessible)
- Recreation amenities for Elizabeth Park

## Online Budget Survey

An online survey with 23 questions, available through the Town's website, opened on September 16 and closed on October 11. The survey was promoted through the Town's website, social media platforms, Shoreline weekly ad, during the Council Pop-ups and by members of Council. A total of 444 responses were submitted, which is the highest response rate for the annual budget survey.

The majority of respondents have lived in the Town of Paradise for over 10 years (60%), with 36% having lived here for over 15 years. Respondents provided feedback on budget priorities and Town programs and services.

Overall, in terms of budgetary priorities, respondents indicated the following are of top importance (i.e. most recurring responses):

1. Road maintenance
2. Traffic management/congestion
3. Sidewalks
4. Pool
5. Taxes
6. High school

The areas ranked as least important priorities:

- Roundabout beautification
- Pool
- Events
- Boathouse

With respect to service delivery, residents were very satisfied with garbage and recycling services and fire services; neutral in the areas of customer service, permits, inspections, and municipal enforcement; and road maintenance ranked in the somewhat satisfied/unsatisfied scores.

When asked about budget allocations, for snow clearing, 50% of respondents want current funding levels maintained while 40% want an increase to funding in this area; for waste management, 80% of respondents support maintaining current level with only 14% supporting an increase; and for public transit, 57% of respondents support maintaining Metrobus funding with 21% indicating increase and 21% indicating a decrease of funding.

To achieve a balanced budget while supporting additional services and address rising costs, 53% of respondents support introducing new user fees for some services that currently have no fees; and 30% supported increasing user fees for services that already have fees with 13% supporting reducing levels of service and 4% opting for increasing property taxes.

When asked if residents would support a tax increase to pay for a pool for the Town, 30% of respondents Strongly Do Not Support a tax increase for the pool and 17% generally do not support the increase; however 26% did support a tax increase for the pool; and 13% of respondents were neutral.

## Next Steps

We thank all those who participated in Budget Talks 2023. The feedback and input received will be used by Council as they deliberate on Budget 2023 and determine the upcoming municipal budget. The Town of Paradise 2023 Municipal Budget will be delivered by the end of November, and when released will be available on the Town's website.