



Media Release

THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VERNON
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Vernon City Council endorses 2019 budget

Mayor Victor Cumming and Councillors have endorsed the 2019 budget as presented within the 2019-2023 Financial Plan, which embeds the continuation of the 1.9% annual cumulative infrastructure levy.

“Council has responded to the community’s desire to see additional investment in public safety,” said Mayor Victor Cumming. “It was a theme that we heard loud and clear during the election campaign, and we have responded by increasing investment in Police, Fire and Bylaw services. We have endorsed a safety budget.”

The 2019 budget recommends a budget increase of 5.3%. This increase includes 1.9% going towards the ongoing infrastructure levy, 1.41% will be used to fund the additional RCMP officers, and 1.99% will be used for operational costs.

The additional investment by Council in public safety combined with the addition of 46 shelter beds and 52 affordable long-term bachelor apartments will help increase community safety for all residents of Vernon.

Fire Services

By transferring fire dispatch service to Kelowna Fire Department’s fire dispatch centre we have redirected the funds to pay for an additional four firefighters. Vernon Fire Rescue Services (VFRS) will also receive funds to modernize the fire prevention and inspection program. Over the last few years the City of Vernon has committed to a thoughtful and strategic plan to build capacity within VFRS and this budget provides the support to continue that work.

Bylaw Compliance Services

The seasonal summer enforcement program was a success over the past three years and funding has been provided to continue the program to ensure Bylaw Compliance officers patrol and respond to complaints in the downtown core, parks and public places to address the street entrenched, transient, overnight temporary sheltering and homeless.

Bylaw Compliance recently moved to a more visible location in downtown in the parkade. The budget provides for four part time bylaw officers (\$85k). In addition council has approved three pilot projects:

- Anti-Tag Team to focus on unwanted graffiti

- Folks on Spokes and Sharps Hotline, where residents can call a number and a team of trained volunteers on bicycles will attend the scene with retrieval kits, remove discarded needles, and transport safely to the host agency for proper disposal. The program will run in cooperation with NOYFSS and Upper Room Mission.
- Weekly clean-up program, which will focus on removal of discarded sharps and paraphernalia, downtown and alley cleanup and education.

RCMP

The focus on hiring additional RCMP members for the Vernon/ North Okanagan Detachment is proceeding, with an additional six officers slated to start work in Vernon before the end of the year.

Capital Projects

Major capital projects recommended in the new budget fall into the following categories:

- Roadway projects - \$9.3m
- Wastewater projects – \$4.7m
- Drainage projects - \$5.1m
- Parks projects - \$1.3m
- Facility projects - \$750k
- Airport projects - \$600k

Some of the larger projects include:

- 30th Street Road Improvement and Utility Reconstruction, the final phase to connect Polson Park to downtown to the Village Green Mall and 48th Ave. – \$5.8m
- 48th Avenue Drainage and Road Rehabilitation to reconstruct a deteriorated storm sewer and roadway, including a lift station and a bike lane - \$2.7m
- 15th Ave Rehabilitation including road and storm rehabilitation, a joint project with DND - \$2.2m
- Construction of a BX Creek sediment control structure to mitigate the risk associated with seasonal flooding - \$1.2m

The endorsed Financial Plan including budget is available on the City's website:

https://www.vernon.ca/sites/default/files/docs/financial/annual_reports/budget_package_final_draft.pdf