



## Media Release

THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VERNON  
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Vernon City Council endorses 2020 budget**

Vernon City Council debated, amended and endorsed the 2020 budget presented within the 2020-2024 Financial Plan. The 2020 budget maintains core services while introducing a host of program improvements within an increase of 4.91%.

“Council has endorsed a budget that maintains quality municipal services that we have all grown accustomed to. It also continues the large reinvestment in our critical infrastructure required for successful day to day functioning in the City. There are also additional investments in community safety, health and well-being,” said Mayor Victor Cumming.

He continued, “Council has committed to provide important additional resources for Fire Rescue Services, Bylaw enforcement, recreation programming and operational equipment to help address air quality concerns. Together, these investments support the sustainability and vitality of our community, while also ensuring we’re in a good position to continue to grow.”

The increase includes 1.9% going towards the ongoing infrastructure levy to address required improvements to municipal roads, storm water management systems, public buildings and parks.

Funding for the City’s infrastructure and key community safety services such as Fire, Bylaw and Policing were not adequately addressed prior to 2012. Small or zero tax rate increases may have been attractive, but have proven to be less than responsible. The infrastructure levy is a cumulative 10-year program increasing 1.9% each year. Annual increases are scheduled to end in 2022. The program provides the necessary funds to repair or replace aging infrastructure and establish a stronger foundation for future community needs.

The 2020 budget also focuses on supporting critical safety services, community programming and Climate Action initiatives.

### **Fire Rescue Services**

Over the last few years the City of Vernon has committed to a thoughtful and strategic plan to build capacity within Vernon Fire Rescue Services (VFRS) to protect our community. In 2019, VFRS conducted a pilot program to staff Fire Station 2 in the Okanagan Landing with an integrated team of regular and Auxilliary firefighters. This program proved to increase service

levels and decrease response times to incidents in the southwest part of the City and played a key role in saving multiple structures and mitigating potentially larger fires.

The 2020 budget provides funding for two new Firefighters to enable the Fire Department to staff Fire Station 2, and to advance the implementation of the Service's Eight Year Strategic Plan. The budget also includes funding for fire apparatus in order to help protect the community from interface wildfires.

### **Bylaw Compliance Services**

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

In addition, Council has approved funding to continue projects that include:

- 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 will attend the scene with retrieval kits, remove discarded needles, and transport the needles safely to the host agency for proper disposal
- Weekly clean-up program, which will focus on removal of discarded sharps and paraphernalia, downtown and alley cleanup and education

### **Recreation Services**

Council has taken the first significant step to implement the 2018 Recreation Master Plan, which provides Greater Vernon Recreation Services with long term direction with regards to provision of recreation facilities, active lifestyle opportunities and recreation services to meet the current and future needs of Greater Vernon residents and visitors.

### **Parks and Public Spaces**

Council has committed to providing sufficient resources to maintain public parks and make repairs where necessary to keep spaces safe and enjoyable for the whole community. Council has increased funding to enable repairs at Alexis Park and Grahame Diamond, and changes to signage along a variety of community trails. New resources also include geese control at Kin Beach and maintenance improvements at the DND ball fields. These resources will contribute to outdoor living and recreation as key attractions for Vernon and North Okanagan residents and visitors.

### **Capital Projects**

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

- Drainage - \$900k
- Major construction - \$2.96m
- Parks - \$2.64m
- Facility - \$600k
- Wastewater - \$5.58m

- Organizational capacity - \$1.86m
- Transportation - \$1.62m

Some of the larger projects include:

- 32<sup>nd</sup> Avenue reconstruction between 33<sup>rd</sup> Street and 35<sup>th</sup> Street to rehabilitate approximately 285 metres of road, with water main, storm sewer and sanitary sewer replacement – \$1.95m
- Construction of a new park at the Civic Arena site - \$2.04m
- Replacement of the existing Okanagan Landing Road sewer force main from Tronson Road to the Vernon Water Reclamation Centre (VWRC) to accommodate increased flow due to development - \$1.8m
- The completion of upgrades on Pleasant Valley Road including road reconstruction, new curbs and gutters, sidewalks, a new storm main and outfall into BX Creek, and safety improvements to the 48<sup>th</sup> Avenue intersection – \$1.01m
- Priority intersection improvements at various locations in the City - \$610k
- The completion of the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> Street new road and multi-use path connection at 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue. This was funded in 2019 but was delayed to 2020.

Air quality management was also addressed within the 2020 budget. Council approved the purchase of a vacuum street sweeper. This equipment will help improve the City's street cleaning program and dust control, therefore reducing air quality warnings.

Finally, Council continued its support of the Climate Action Plan, which is due to be presented to Council in May 2020, and provided funding for a Drainage Engineer to assess existing and pending storm water issues and encouraging sustainable infrastructure.

The current Council and the past two Councils have had to do some 'heavy lifting' in order to recover from unsustainable budget decisions. By maintaining the infrastructure levy program started in 2012, through to 2022, and making important investments in policing, bylaw enforcement and fire service, the City is confident the next Council will have a much less challenging time creating responsible budgets to continue providing effective and efficient local government services that benefit our citizens, our businesses, our environment and our future.

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

<https://www.vernon.ca/government-services/departments/financial-services/budget-process>