



## Media Release

THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VERNON  
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: December 6, 2022

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### **Vernon Council endorses 2023 budget with continued focus on community safety**

Vernon City Council has debated, amended and endorsed the 2023 budget presented within the *2023 – 2027 Financial Plan*, with a total budget increase of 4.79%, which includes a:

- **1.47%** increase for annual operating expenses;
- **1.90%** increase for the final installment of the 10-year infrastructure levy program; and
- **1.42%** increase to improve services to the public.

“The 2023 budget maintains core municipal services and reaffirms Council’s commitment to community safety,” said Mayor Victor Cumming. “Prior to the budget planning process, Council directed Administration to bring forward a budget with an operating increase that was 3% or less. Thanks to the diligent and careful work of staff, the increase for the proposed operating budget was less than half that amount.

“While deliberating the budget, Council carefully reviewed proposed improvements to a number of core public services and thoughtfully considered the balance between affordability and community needs. In the end, Council endorsed a budget that prioritizes safety, improves snow clearing, maintains services our citizens rely on every day, and enables the City’s ability to practically and sustainably support an ever-growing community.”

#### **Police, Fire Services and Bylaw Compliance**

The 2023 budget includes the addition of two new RCMP officers, a Deputy Fire Chief position for Vernon Fire Rescue Services, and a new Bylaw Compliance Officer.

“These positions will bolster our local emergency response teams and are a strong benefit for our community,” said Mayor Cumming. “In the last few years, we’ve seen a significant increase in call volumes with requests for emergency assistance. Our population has also grown steadily in the last five years, as shown in the latest Statistics Canada Census.

“Therefore, it was time for us to increase staff resources for our emergency response agencies so they can continue providing these essential services without compromising the well-being of those on the front line.”

## **Snow clearing enhancements**

Another area of focus in the 2023 budget was on snow clearing services across the community. Council endorsed three operational service level adjustments to enhance snow clearing at bus stops and in priority lanes throughout the winter season, and to include weekend and holiday clearing of sidewalks that are maintained by the City. These enhancements to service will occur after final adoption of the 2023 – 2027 Financial Plan Bylaw, which is expected to happen on January 23, 2023.

“For several years, Council has heard requests from the public to increase snow clearing efforts in these specific areas,” said Mayor Cumming. “These changes to the budget come directly from those requests.

“Council has also given staff the financial resources they may need to have snow *removed* from key areas of the City – such as the downtown core, 27<sup>th</sup> Street, and 32<sup>nd</sup> Street (Highway 97) – on a more frequent basis, if we have a significant snowfall season like we did in 2021. However, if those funds are needed for snow removal, they will come from a Snow Removal Reserve so there will be no additional impact to taxation.”

## **1.9% infrastructure levy and Capital program**

In 2013, Council introduced a cumulative 1.9% infrastructure levy as a 10-year program to provide the necessary funds to strategically repair or replace aging infrastructure and establish a stronger foundation for our community. This program helps fund improvements to municipal roads, stormwater and wastewater management systems, public buildings, and parks.

In 2021, the infrastructure levy was paused for one year, in response to impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. It was resumed in 2022 and will be continued for its 10<sup>th</sup> and final year in 2023.

Vernon's 2023 Capital program is consistent with the 2023 Rolling 5-Year Infrastructure Plan and will include more than \$21.5 million in projects. Some of the larger projects are:

- Kin Race Track Athletic Park Phase 1 - \$3.0M
- Polson Park Vernon Creek Naturalization Phase 1 - \$1.95M
- Civic Memorial Park Phase 3 - \$1.36M
- Infrastructure replacement on 32<sup>nd</sup> Ave from Pleasant Valley Road to 20<sup>th</sup> St - \$1.72M
- Infrastructure replacement on 32<sup>nd</sup> Ave and 38<sup>th</sup> St near Alexis Park Drive and 30<sup>th</sup> Ave - \$2.78M
- The extension of sanitary sewer collector pipe to a portion of the remaining non-serviced areas in the Okanagan Landing area using horizontal directional drilling - \$1.11M

## **Active Living Centre**

Following the referendum approval by Vernon residents, the City will borrow the funds necessary to develop the Active Living Centre.

As part of the 2023 budget, the City will be able to undertake the final design process, which is expected to cost up to \$12 million (approximately 10% of the project budget). However, as

indicated during the referendum information campaign, there is no impact to taxation in 2023 for the Active Living Centre project.

The funds that will be needed for the detailed design work are expected to be borrowed from the Municipal Finance Authority (MFA) in the Fall of 2023. More information will be provided to the community on progress of the Active Living Centre project as details become available, and there will be opportunity for further community input next year, to help determine design elements such as aquatic play features.

For more information on the *2023 – 2027 Financial Plan* and the 2023 budget, visit the City's website at [www.vernon.ca/budgetprocess](http://www.vernon.ca/budgetprocess).