

MESSAGE FROM MAYOR SHANTZ



This budget represents a transparent collaboration between Council, staff and taxpayers. In establishing a process for the first 'Strong Mayor's Budget' in Woolwich, I wanted to ensure that Council and residents were able to contribute early on. I asked staff to provide a very preliminary analysis

of how the status quo would look, what we would need to rapidly move toward a budget that sets us on a good fiscal trajectory and something in between. We had a number of meetings for Council to discuss options, and for residents to speak to those options. We received input on our Engage platform and through communication to their Councillors and me. Our focus has been on maintaining strong core services and ensuring long term sustainability. Thank you to everyone who contributed.

We heard concerns about staffing, administration and efficiency. With additional time to analyze the financial numbers, our base budget increase is about \$3.05 per month for the average household or 2.9% which falls closely in line with inflation. In addition, our Chief Administrative Officer has committed time to take a close look at the organizational structure with an eye toward improving interdepartmental communication, reducing

redundancy and reporting back to Council in 2026 on opportunities for savings.

In 2025, we have been implementing a new financial reporting system which has allowed more in-depth and accurate analysis of our reserves, spending and revenue. The system is still being implemented, but through the past year it has allowed us to look more closely at our reserves and financial stability. Council heard that our corporate fiscal health is in jeopardy. While we are not in dire straits, we do need to quickly reset our path forward. We have about one quarter of the reserves that a healthy community would expect to have.

To that end, most of the remainder of the levy increase in the budget (5.3% or about \$5.62 per month) is to begin to move toward more healthy reserves to support things like the winter control budget, operating contingency, infrastructure levy, financial reporting discrepancies and fire equipment reserve.

In 2026 we will continue to advance affordable housing options, develop a multi-year budget and a ten-year capital forecast for our assets and investments.

Council meetings are scheduled for January 13 and 27 where we will hear any additional feedback. Council amendments must be considered before February 5 according to the Strong Mayor legislation.

It's impossible to build a budget that everyone will be happy with, but I believe that together, we have achieved a balance between affordability with sustainability, while protecting the services you rely on and preparing for the years ahead. You will find details in the pages that follow.

On behalf of Council and myself, thank you to staff for your analysis and for doing the hard work of looking at options and opportunities to ensure Woolwich remains a strong, well managed community.



Sandy Shantz

Mayor
Township of Woolwich