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Portugal Gove
St. Philip's

BUDGET SPEECH 2024

Presented by
Councillor Dave Bartlett,
Administration and Finance
Committee chair

November 28, 2023





**Portugal Cove
St. Philip's**

Good evening, Mayor McDonald, fellow Councillors, staff and residents. As Chair of the Administration and Finance Committee, it is my pleasure to present the 2024 Portugal Cove – St. Philip's Budget on behalf of Council. This budget is a reflection of the commitment to the community's priorities as we implement strategic investments in those areas that the community prioritized in the recent Strategic Plan.

Engaging with citizens and listening to their ideas is very important to this council and our wonderful team at the Town Hall. We are in the process of incorporating technological advancements and innovative solutions to improve municipal services, streamline processes, and enhance communication with residents. We are happy to report a high level of positive engagement from our citizens in 2023, whether that be through our 2022 strategic planning process, community group meetings, budget sessions, development notices and consultations, public surveys, public events, hearings, phone calls, letters, and more! We hope to continue this trend of active public engagement and we believe that working and growing together as a community is a strength of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's.

This year's budget was designed by focusing on the key priorities that residents requested through the Strategic Plan as well as the budget survey. As we aim to deliver a fair and responsible budget each year, we strive to minimize the impact on residents and businesses.

Therefore, the mil rate for property tax and businesses will remain the same at 7 and 8.1 respectively. The water and sewer fees will also remain the same.

Our 2024 budget includes additional funds allocated to enhance the Recreation Programs offered by the Town, installing the next phase of solar lighting in Voisey's Brook Park to enhance walkability, completion of the splash pad and continuing the development of our new trail system. Implementation of our Trails Master Plan will continue in 2024. The plan will see the development of the PATH Network: the Portugal Cove – St. Philip's Active Transportation and Hiking Network, creating environmental benefits by enabling more active transportation in town and will also enhance community well-being as well as tourism and business development.

In addition to increased recreational offerings, the community expressed a desire for continued and enhanced public safety and public works infrastructure. As such, the 2024 budget includes significant investments in road upgrades, water and wastewater infrastructure, and continued support for our fire and emergency services. Furthermore, our asset management plan will ensure financial sustainability for the Town as we continue to provide great services and programs to our residents, while meeting our future challenges. Just to name a few projects underway, we have:

1. Electrifying the Town's Fleet, commitment to reducing our carbon footprint
2. Portugal Cove Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrades
3. St. Philip's Wastewater Treatment Plant Expansion
4. Climate Change Challenge Fund: Removing use of Fossil Fuels from the Town's Depot
5. Water and Sewer Upgrades in Rainbow Gully Park
6. Two new waste management vehicles to support more efficiency within operations
7. Splash Pad at Rainbow Gully and new change room and washrooms

The Town is currently hosting engagement on an Accessibility Plan that will be completed by the end of the year. Within the plan will be recommendations for 2024 to 2027. The Accessibility Plan will build on the great achievements the Town and Inclusion Community Group have made over the past number of years. A top highlight is ensuring that children can attend summer programs without barriers. We have also made upgrades to existing facilities, offered supportive training, and purchased supportive equipment.

The major initiative in our strategic plan to stimulate local business growth is the development of a business park which will act as a commercial centre for the town. As we work toward the development of the business park over the next several years, in 2024 we are offering a virtual business incubator for residents. The incubator will have a simple focus – to activate untapped entrepreneurial ideas and talent, and help current and new entrepreneurs transform great ideas into great businesses in our community.

The Town of Portugal Cove St. Philip's is strategically positioned to pitch in and combat the ongoing housing crisis in the region. We are proud to be a preferred place for new and current residents to call home. In 2023, the Town has issued 140 building permits with an estimated total value of work at \$13.5 million, with 38 of those permits being for new homes in the community. Additional permits were issued in 2023 to create 30 new building lots, and the Town is currently working with applicants on projects that would create an additional 137 building lots over the next two years. Work on the 2024-2034 Municipal Plan and Development Regulations is underway and we look forward to seeing that come to fruition in 2024.

Protecting and Repairing the Environment continues to be one of our key strategic action areas. Budget 2024 enables the Town to continue to forge ahead with environmental initiatives which position us as one of the leading municipalities in the province with respect to environmental stewardship, climate action, and the transition to the green economy. Similar to recent years, in 2024 we will continue to host a Green Team in the summer to work on environmental projects, we will host our annual Environmental Fair, and we will continue with our community garden as well as work to encourage more recycling and composting. For a couple of highlights, in 2023 we undertook a comprehensive update to our Schedule E Environmental Mapping and we are pleased to introduce our new septic pumping rebate in Budget 2024 to assist residents in cleaning out septic tanks as a way to improve water quality in our local streams and water bodies. This past year saw the development of an outdoor classroom along the trail in Rainbow Gully Park. This site has endless opportunities to provide education on the environment through Town programs, local organizations, and youth from Brookside Intermediate.

In 2024, we will introduce a Community Grants policy and streamlined application process aimed at extending financial support to our invaluable community groups. Recognizing these groups as pivotal partners in our shared mission of community building and development, this new process is designed to foster collaboration on common objectives within our Town.

This initiative not only underscores our commitment to an open and transparent approach but also serves as a catalyst for fostering growth in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's. Emphasizing the significant contributions of community groups, our aim is to harness their positive impact on social, environmental, and economic facets, ensuring a vibrant and thriving future for our town.

And last, but not least, in 2024 we are proud to announce that the Town will be hosting the Killick Coast games, returning for the first time since 2019. The games are expected to see over 500 youth from the Killick Coast region participate in various sports over a week. We look forward to welcoming our neighboring municipalities to the community at the end of July.

I look forward to seeing many exciting projects come to fruition throughout the course of the next year and the years ahead too as we work to implement the priorities we heard from the people of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's. Thank you to those who took the time to contribute to the budget consultation process. Public engagement plays an important role in this process and we encourage you all to stay engaged and active as we make decisions that will affect the future of our great community.

Thank you!



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