

2016 Budget Speech

As Chair of the Finance and Administration Committee I am pleased to present the 2016 Budget for the Town of Portugal Cove – St. Philip’s. We are truly fortunate to live in a town with such an abundance of community spirit, one with a rich heritage and a bright future.

Creating a budget is a delicate balancing act, between providing vital services and programs on the one hand all the while keeping taxation within reasonable limits. This is especially important in a challenging time for our provincial economy, due to economic factors beyond our control.

It is within this background that we present the 2016 budget for Portugal Cove-St. Philip’s. Of major concern to many residents has been property assessments, which are conducted by an independent provincial body, the Municipal Assessment Agency. Average assessments went up by 16 per cent, based on property values in January 2014 – prior to the subsequent downturn in the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Your Council has listened to concerns about increased assessments and its effect on household taxes. As a result of the increase in assessments, we will be dropping the mil rate from 7.9 mils to 6.9 mils – a reduction of 12.6 per cent. This means that there will be an average household tax increase of 3.4%, as opposed to 16 per cent without the reduction. Residents should be aware that decisions on household tax levels are based on the Town’s budgetary requirements by setting the mil rate to obtain the level of necessary revenue.

The total projected revenue for 2016 is \$14,948,669, an amount that includes government transfers for capital projects. Detailed information on revenues and expenditures will be provided on the Town’s web site for the information of residents.

Your Council is now half way through its term and this budget is a reflection of the direction we have set over the last two years. This budget also outlines the vision that we have for the next two years and beyond. Council established this vision for the community through extensive outreach efforts that included numerous public engagement opportunities with residents, community groups and business people. In addition, we now have a better understanding of our future needs and demands based on data obtained through key initiatives such as our Asset Management Plan, which

we are currently finalizing. The result of these efforts is improved planning and a more consistent and predictable path forward for Portugal Cove – St. Philip’s.

During the most recent budget consultations we heard a number of concerns and priorities from those who attended. These include:

- Concerns about assessments and potential tax increases.
- Increased pedestrian safety and walkability.
- Enhanced environmental protection.
- Improved services and programming.
- More business opportunities.
- Support for agriculture and farming.
- Consistency in taxation and budgeting.

Your council has listened to these concerns and we have adopted a number of initiatives and projects to support these issues. This will continue in 2016 and beyond.

We appreciate the support of our residents, especially all those who gave input during the public budget consultations as we strive to become a sustainable community and a model for the region and province. We continue to encourage residents to provide input in the future.

Respectfully submitted,

Gavin Will

Chair, Finance and Administration Committee