

## Innisfail Town Council approves fiscally responsible budget with focus on the future

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** **December 15, 2020**

On Monday, December 14, 2020, Innisfail Town Council approved the Town's 2021 operating and capital budgets.

Through a collaborative effort between Administration and Council, a budget was produced that will see no tax increase. The 2021 budget reflects a 2% decrease in the Town's revenues which was offset by a 4% decrease of expenses achieved through a collaborative effort by all Town departments.

While being mindful that the province and region are still in a position of recovery in today's economic climate, the Town produced a budget to maintain the service levels that the community has come to expect.

Council passed the operating budget of \$21,692,621, capital budget of \$4,726,000, and a contingency of \$61,730. An increase to water and wastewater rates was included to cover delivery costs and build reserves for future infrastructure.

Tax assessments are not determined until the spring, and mill rates will be set in March of 2021. These together will determine individual tax amounts for town properties.

### Budget Highlights

With the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic compounded by the effects of low energy prices worldwide, Administration has worked diligently this year to ensure the protection of core services with a desire to achieve pre-pandemic service levels.

Further consideration was given to the future development of Town facilities. The Town faces many challenges regarding the current state of its facilities so reserves have been established to prepare for the costs associated with future projects. This year's budget will supplement the facility reserve through a slight increase in franchise fees and by reallocating funds to this reserve.

Despite the challenges faced in 2020, the Town's financial condition remains strong and risk averse and the municipality is in the enviable position of being able to offer consistent and stable taxes, maintain a healthy level of reserves, and carry relatively no financial debt.

### Utility Rates

Innisfail has water rates that are slightly below average when compared with many other communities in central Alberta. In order to provide safe water, and to build reserves for future infrastructure replacement projects, water rates will increase this year from \$2.50 per cubic metre to \$2.60 per cubic metre. This includes a \$.05 increase in the rate charged to the Town by the **Mountain View Regional Water Commission**. The new budget sees the monthly water flat rate remain at \$10.00 per metered site.

Wastewater (sewer) rates will increase from \$3.20 per cubic metre to \$3.45 per cubic metre. This \$.25 increase reflects a \$.05 increase in rates charged by the **South Red Deer Regional Wastewater Commission**. The monthly wastewater flat rate will also remain the same as last year at \$10.00 per metered site.

These increases will ensure the Town can continue to provide quality water to residents while bringing rates in line with comparable communities, better reflecting real-worlds costs.

Household solid waste basic rates will increase from \$23.00 to \$25.00 per month per site with the long-term goals of providing expanded household solid-waste service and reducing the remaining balance owing from the service expansion that took place in 2019.

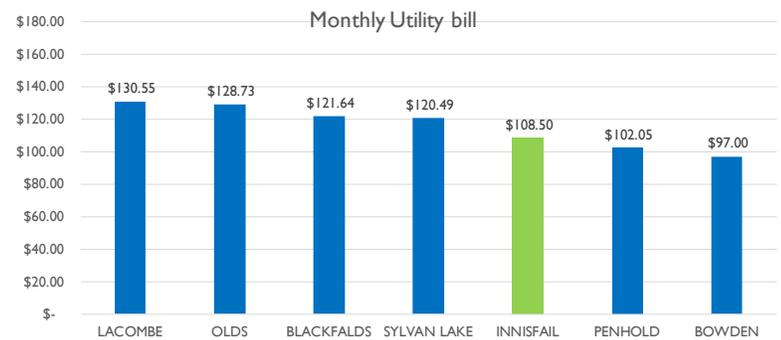
This year's budget will see the implementation of a new storm water flat charge of \$3.00 for residential and \$6.00 for non-residential Town utility customers. The intent of this program is to establish a dedicated reserve to fund the replacement of aging storm water infrastructure.

### 2020 Capital Projects

Key projects were identified as priorities in 2021, and grant money was available for many of these. Despite financial challenges, council has proposed to move forward with many of these projects. Those identified in the 2021 budget include:

- CP Rail Pedestrian Crossing
- CP Rail Whistle Cessation
- 53 Avenue Infrastructure Repairs
- 46 Avenue Infrastructure Repairs
- 2021 Surface Improvements
- 2021 Mill & Overlay
- Water Fill Station
- Playground Improvement: "Mac's Park" Collaborative Project
- Gateway Landscaping Phase 2
- Ball Diamond #7 Enhancement

Average utility bill per household (based on 10m<sup>2</sup>) - comparable central Alberta municipalities



*"This past year, we faced many challenges. Most obviously, the COVID-19 pandemic has tested us as a community both mentally and financially. Through it, we have been there to support each other and this budget reflects that spirit of working together. We understand what a difficult year this has been for our residents and businesses, so the Town worked to cut spending while ensuring it continues to provide the services the community expects and deserves. Despite these trying times, our community remains robust and we continue to work towards a prosperous post-pandemic future."*

— Mayor Jim Romane

**For more information, please contact:**

Heather Whymark  
 Director of Corporate Services  
 heather.whymark@innisfail.ca  
 403-227-3376

Todd Becker  
 Chief Administrative Officer  
 todd.becker@innisfail.ca  
 403-227-3376

Jim Romane  
 Mayor, Town of Innisfail  
 mayor@innisfail.ca  
 403-227-3376