



Town of Paradise Budget 2018 Speech

Councillor Paul Dinn

Chair, Finance Committee

December 19, 2017

PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Good evening Your Worship, fellow Councillors, Town staff, residents and members of the media. Tonight, it is my pleasure to present the 2018 budget for the Town of Paradise, my first as Chair of the Finance Committee.

Without question, 2017 has been a busy and productive year for the Town of Paradise and for all of us on Council. The Town is now ranked as the fourth largest municipality in the province, according to the census data released in February. Since the last census in 2011, the Town's population grew by 20.9 percent and now stands at just over 21,000. We are also among the fastest growing in the country ranked 21st in terms of population growth.

With this type of growth, it's important to reflect and review on how we do things. For Budget 2018, staff were asked to examine all areas and departments of Town operations. The purpose was to find efficiencies and cost-savings and to ensure that we are offering the right mix of services and programs for a municipality the size of Paradise.

Your Worship, budget preparations also involved consultations with our residents. Again this year, we conducted a pre-budget online survey and asked residents to send us their comments and suggestions for budget priorities. We welcome this input and thank all residents who took the time to participate. In the coming year, we plan to build on this practice and enhance our public consultation process.

For the 2018 pre-budget survey, residents indicated that the main priority areas are road work and infrastructure and maintaining and enhancing our recreational facilities. These priority areas echo what all of us on Council heard going door-to-door in September during the municipal election

All this information and feedback that we gathered from the consultations, during the campaign, and in our regular discussions with residents, businesses and community groups was considered as we deliberated and prepared Budget 2018.

Careful thought was given to the services and programs we can offer and the investments we can make within our fiscal structure. The Town has a proud record of strong financial management and we want to ensure we continue to strike the right balance.

In that regard Your Worship, tonight I present the balanced 2018 Budget for the Town of Paradise of \$35.7 million. Furthermore, I am proud to note that for Budget 2018 there is an overall decrease of 2.4 percent in the Town's operating budget from 2017. This budget provides residents with the level of services and scope of programs for which Paradise is known while maintaining the residential and commercial mil rates of 6.8 and 11.5 respectively.

For 2018, the Town is reducing the Infrastructure Improvement Fee from \$3000 to \$2500 for both residential and commercial builds and developments. We have listened to the concerns of our business community who asked Council to examine all fees to ensure we are doing what we can to support our businesses and development in Paradise.

In the coming year, fire services will account for \$4.2 million and water services will account for \$2 million in our budget. These services are provided regionally, and the Town is required to pay its contribution. We know our residents expect and need these services, and working regionally enables us to provide them in a cost-effective manner. Your Worship, we are able to accommodate these costs without increasing our water and sewer fee to residents and businesses.

In the area of transportation and infrastructure, Budget 2018 allocates investments for several areas. We understand that this is a priority for residents and Council remains committed to ensuring Paradise has an appropriate road system. For the past number of years we have been working to widen Topsail Road and that project is nearing completion. We have implemented public transit and we will continue to offer Metrobus service to our residents. The ridership numbers are continually increasing and our residents have told us they appreciate the service being in Paradise.

In 2018, the transportation projects include \$2 million for the upgrade to Clearview Heights, \$1.5 million for a roundabout at the intersection of Topsail Road / McNamara Drive / Clearview Heights, and \$1.5 million for Phase III of Paradise Road upgrades. We will also continue with our planned street rehabilitation and road maintenance work.

Related to our transportation system, for winter 2018 the Town is increasing the snow clearing budget. Our residents have told us they wanted further investment in this area, particularly to address snow clearing in cul-de-sacs and we are able to accommodate that in the budget.

Also on the infrastructure side, we are continuing with the water and sewer priority list and with the upgrades to the Waste Water Treatment Plant. This work is required so that the operation meets federal environmental regulations. These projects have a combined \$6.2 million allocation for next year.

For several of our infrastructure projects, the Town received funding under federal-provincial cost-shared agreements and this work would not be possible without that support. We thank the Government of Canada and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador for this investment in our Town.

Your Worship, in 2018 the Town is launching a new program to assist residents who currently have septic systems. The Waste Disposal Assistance Program will offer a rebate to residents to assist with the cost of having residential septic tanks pumped. Residents will be eligible for the rebate once every three years and the work must be completed by a licensed septic disposal contractor. Full program details, including the application process, will be outlined early in the new year.

On the recreational side, we are proud to offer our residents a full slate of facilities and programs. In 2017 we opened our newest facility, the St. Thomas Community Centre. The new building is used by a number of community groups and we are hearing great feedback from those organizations. Residents are also telling us they appreciate the new centre and the amenities it offers.

In the coming year, we will again commit to enhance our recreational facilities. With the large youth population we have here in Paradise, with four K to six schools in Town, and with a new intermediate school on the horizon, we want our youth to have to the necessary amenities to play and grow in our community.

We have heard from Town sporting associations that an artificial surface is needed for Paradise as well as lighting for a baseball field. Such upgrades will enable groups to extend the playing season and allow for greater participation to go with many other benefits to our recreational programs. Budget 2018 allocates \$500,000 to work with our sporting associations to leverage additional funding to assist in making these improvements a possibility.

Your worship, through careful examination, thoughtful planning, and strategic decisions, we are able to present the balanced Budget 2018, without raising taxes or fees all while maintaining current programs, services, and investments for our residents.

In fact, once again this year our debt-servicing ratio has decreased. It currently stands at 6.7 percent, among the lowest in the region. This is down from 9.6 percent in 2015. With our focus on sound fiscal management, this ratio has been steadily declining year over year. We are proud to be able to offer the full range of programs and services and make strategic investments in all areas of Town all while reducing our debt load.

Sound fiscal management continues to be a top focus for Council and we remain steadfast in that commitment to our residents. That is why we are constantly reviewing our operations and our programs all year long, not just during the budget planning process. This approach ensures we remain current for the size and scope of our municipality and that public funds are spent in an efficient and economical manner.

With a four year mandate ahead of us, Council is committed to working hard on behalf of our residents. As Chair of the Finance Committee, I extend sincere thanks to Council and senior staff for their considerable efforts to prepare Budget 2018. We look forward to the year ahead and all that it will bring to the Town of Paradise. Our municipality truly is a great place in which to live, play and work.

“BE IT RESOLVED that the Town of Paradise, in accordance with Section 77(1) of the Municipalities Act, adopt the 2018 Budget with operating revenues and expenditures totalling \$35,778,741.”

“BE IT RESOLVED that the Town of Paradise adopt the 2018 Schedule of Tax Rates as submitted.”

“BE IT RESOLVED that the Town of Paradise adopt the 2018 Fee Schedules as submitted.”