

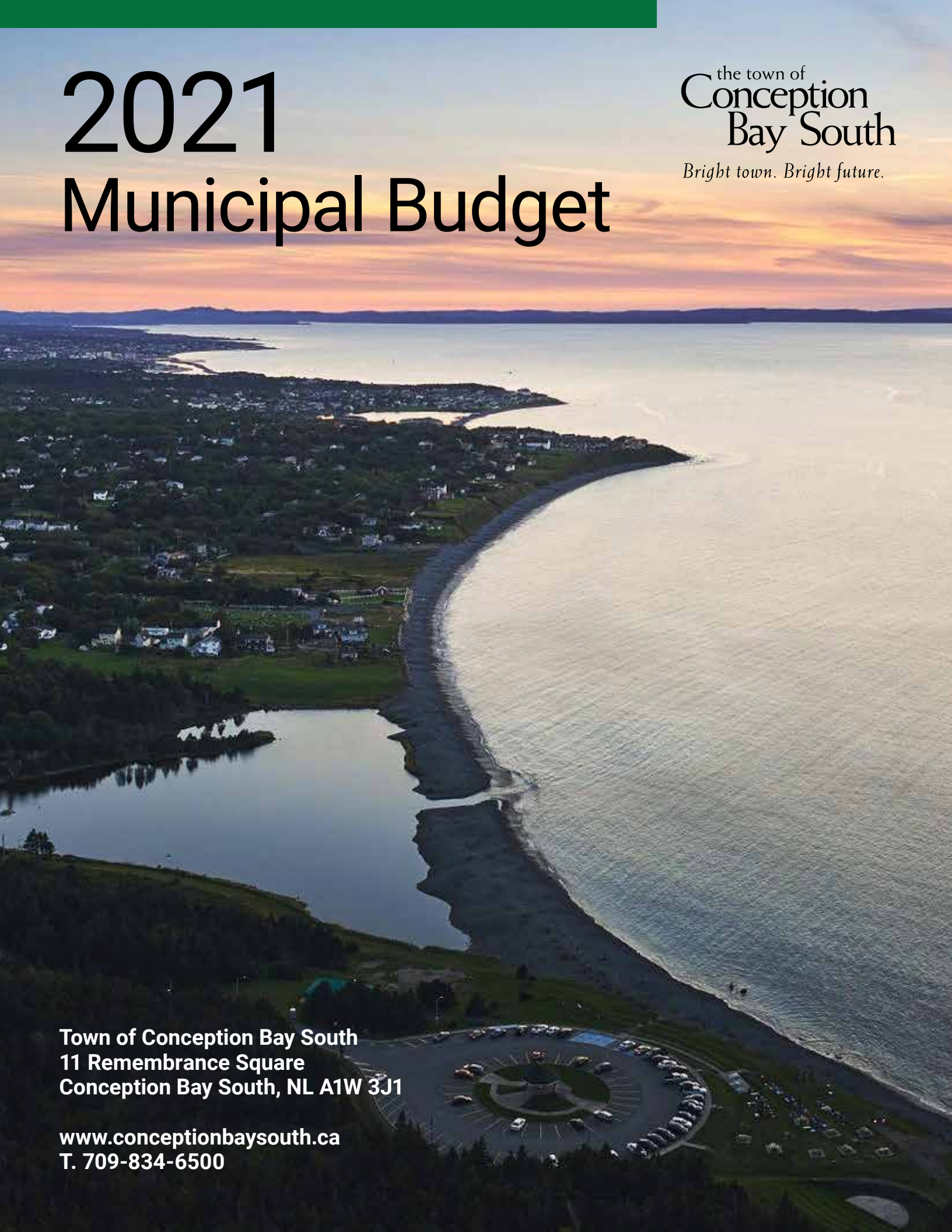
2021 Municipal Budget

the town of
**Conception
Bay South**

Bright town. Bright future.

**Town of Conception Bay South
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2nd largest
municipality
in NL

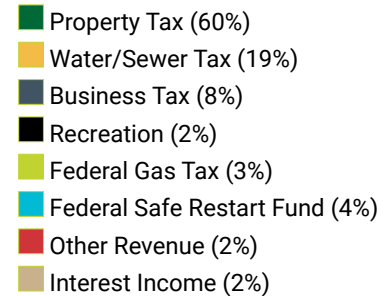
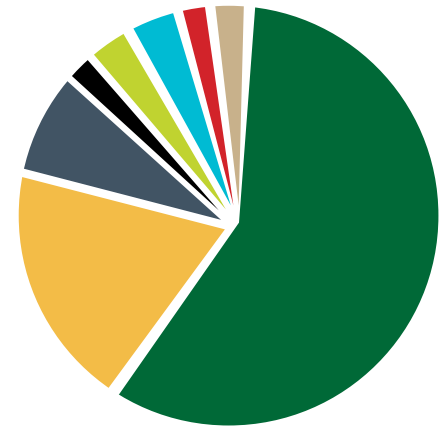
41 years
median age

27,000
population

\$37.2
million budget

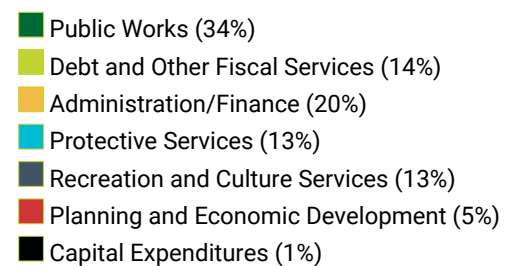
2021 REVENUES


Property Tax	\$22,409,460
Water/Sewer	\$6,825,900
Business Tax	\$2,973,537
Recreation Revenue	\$845,180
Federal Gas Tax Grant	\$1,107,718
Other - Provincial Gas Tax Grant	\$204,300
Other - Federal Safe Restart Fund	\$1,539,564
Other - Fees and Permits	\$487,460
Other - Capital Assessments and Fees	\$150,000
Interest	\$700,000
TOTAL REVENUE	\$37,243,119



2021 EXPENDITURES

Public Works	\$12,746,445
Debt and Other Fiscal Services	\$5,244,770
Administration/Finance	\$7,393,687
Protective Services	\$5,030,378
Recreation and Cultural Services	\$4,673,503
Planning and Economic Development	\$1,820,203
Capital Expenditures	\$334,133
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	\$37,243,119





Bright town, bright future.

Presented on November 24, 2020

Good evening, your Worship and my fellow Councillors. It is my pleasure to present the Town of Conception Bay South's budget for 2021.

When I stood before Council this time last year, no one anticipated the challenges that would come before us as the year progressed. 2020 started with the worst snowstorm in a generation, what has since been dubbed 'Snowmageddon.'

Record accumulations and strong winds paralyzed the Northeast Avalon, forcing schools and businesses, including grocery stores, to close their doors for extended periods. Municipalities, including the Town of Conception Bay South, declared a State of Emergency which required residents to stay off the roads while our dedicated Public Works staff, as well as those of the Government of Newfoundland & Labrador, cleared the way to allow safe travel throughout our community.

Conception Bay South faced a unique challenge that most other municipalities did not. Storm surge saw large waves pummeling our coastline, inflicting significant damage throughout our community. It soon became evident that the Inner Harbour Breakwater in Long Pond was compromised and upland properties in the area were at risk. The Town quickly mobilized external assistance to commence emergency repairs on the breakwater to mitigate any further risk to our residents.

The T'Railway, one of the Town's most cherished assets also sustained extensive damage, so much so

that portions of the 14 kilometre trail were closed for extended periods of time. Yet Council persevered and I am pleased to report that the final cosmetic repairs are now being completed. There is a remaining one kilometre portion of the trail that has not yet reopened and will require additional engineering and intensive repairs, currently planned for 2021.

Snowmageddon placed an incredible strain on our staff as well as our budget: snow removal costs alone were approximately 670 thousand dollars; emergency repairs to the breakwater were approximately 1.5 million dollars; and initial repairs to the T'Railway totaled 150 thousand dollars with remaining repair and engineering work to potentially cost millions.

This unexpected and unprecedented weather event could have had a profound impact on the Town's finances and operations for 2020 and 2021. Fortunately, Council worked proactively with our elected officials in both Provincial and Federal Governments and secured approval for emergency relief funding late last month, which will make the financial burden of this event much more manageable.

Little did we know after that event how much we would again need the support of both Provincial and Federal Governments throughout the year.

In March, residents of Conception Bay South joined the rest of the province and country in responding to a global pandemic, COVID-19. This tested the resilience of our residents and as they always do, the people of Conception Bay South rose to the occasion. We acted quickly, closing our facilities, offices and schools to

A beautiful community on the edge of nature.



contain the spread of the virus. Collectively, we were successful in flattening the initial curve.

With health and safety of our residents top of mind, Council slowly and carefully resumed operations and reopened facilities, at all times strictly adhering to the health and safety guidelines and social distancing measures of the Provincial and Federal Governments. Sadly, the Town's residents were not spared completely from the heart-wrenching loss caused by this pandemic. Our thoughts go out to the families here in our Town and elsewhere who have been directly affected.

Your Worship, this is and will continue to be a challenging time. We are not out of the woods yet and we must continue to remain vigilant. No expenses were spared this year and no expense will be spared next year to keep our community safe. Protecting the health and safety of our residents is the most important investment Council will ever make.

I would like to thank our entire staff for their remarkable efforts throughout the pandemic. To ensure proper physical distancing, our staff adapted and worked from different locations throughout the Town including many office staff who worked remotely, a major inconvenience and challenge for many. I would also like to acknowledge our staff and volunteers with the Fire Department. Being a first responder and essential worker is never easy; however, 2020 has tested our front-line workers' training to the limit and they have delivered on every level. We are always grateful for their efforts and for all those who provide essential services. We can never say 'thank you' enough.

While we will continue to keep our residents and staff safe it is not an understatement to say that COVID-19 will have a profound impact on this Budget. Due to capacity restraints at our recreation facilities, our revenues for Budget 2021 in this area are projected to be down by 617 thousand dollars over 2020 estimates. To keep our facilities and offices safely open, our cleaning, staffing and personal protective equipment costs have also increased by more than 400 thousand dollars.

Compounding the fallout of COVID-19 is the impact of a deteriorating economy over the last two years. The latest assessments from the Municipal Assessment Agency indicate that property values in Conception Bay South have decreased by 4.7 percent, resulting in a decrease in property tax revenue of approximately 1.1 million dollars.

These challenging economic impacts saw Council starting the Budget 2021 process facing a perfect financial storm, with a total projected budget shortfall of almost 2 million dollars. One would think there would be little to smile about at the end of that process; however, **I am absolutely delighted to stand before you and my fellow Councillors as we announce a balanced budget of \$37.2 million for 2021.** This is our last budget as we enter the final year of our four-year term in office.

I can say quite categorically that despite the financial hardships associated with COVID-19 and a deteriorating economy this Council delivered on everything, including our four major priorities.

Urban living in a rural setting.



Priority 1: No increased taxes

First, this Council believes that the best place for residents to keep their hard-earned money is in their own pockets. The cost of living is high enough, that people shouldn't have to spend their money on increased taxes. I am proud to say that despite facing a budget shortfall of 2 million dollars, Council is able to keep its residential mill rate and water and sewer tax at its current rates. This means our residential tax rate and water and sewer tax will remain the lowest of all comparable municipalities on the Northeast Avalon.

This also means that many residents may actually see a decrease in their property taxes, as assessed property values are down by over a million dollars.

Managing our water bill from the St. John's Regional Water Authority was incredibly challenging this year and will present further challenges for Budget 2021. Many residents who normally commute to work outside the Town were not able to do so due to the safety measures imposed by the Government of Newfoundland & Labrador because of COVID-19, resulting in a significant increase in water consumption. The Town also experienced challenges with water main breaks which saw considerable uncontrolled water loss. These particular issues will result in a much higher than anticipated water bill at the end of 2020 and a higher estimate for water costs in 2021, with an estimated total increase of 343 thousand dollars. This increase is based on historical water consumption trends with an allowance for growth and a reasonable contingency for unexpected water issues. Once again,

Council found creative ways to absorb this increased cost in Budget 2021 such that no additional financial burden from water costs will be passed on to our residents.

Your Worship, 2020 has presented a particularly challenging time for our business community. Many businesses facing financial challenges will be pleased to hear that Council is also freezing the business mill rate at its current level.

These measures continue to make the Town of Conception Bay South an incredibly affordable and attractive community to live, raise a family and do business.

I am pleased to stand here and say that this will be the fourth year in a row where this Council has avoided increasing the tax burden on our residents. Council's entire mandate has lapsed without increasing the financial impact on residents and that is something we should all be very proud of.

To further protect against financial strain on our taxpayers, we will continue the 12-month interest-free monthly payment plan that was initiated in 2017. Last year, over 3,400 households and businesses took advantage of this payment option. In addition, we are pleased to confirm the continuance of our Low-Income Property Tax Reduction Program, Senior Citizens Property Tax Reduction Program, Seniors Property Tax Incentive Program and the Tax Incentive Program for Conception Bay Area Chamber of Commerce Members.

More opportunity (and ocean view) per square foot.



Through these unprecedented times we continue to encourage residents to take advantage of Conception Bay South's many recreational amenities. Despite the significant drop in revenue and increased costs associated with COVID-19 operating restrictions, I am pleased to report that there will be no increase to the Town's fee structure, recreational or otherwise. Again, this marks the fourth year in a row in which we have absorbed these costs without passing them on.

Council shielded residents from these increased costs by remaining steadfast guardians of the Town's finances, carefully managing our costs and actively reducing our debt servicing costs. For 2020 alone, Council's Debt Reduction Strategy freed up more than 1 million dollars. Over the years ahead, we expect it will free up an additional 1.75 to 2.75 million dollars. This now marks four consecutive years in which Council has been able to reduce expenditures. We are very proud of that track record and believe we are providing incredible value for our residents at the lowest cost possible.

Priority 2: Improved Roads, Sidewalks & Safety

This brings us to our second major priority: roads and sidewalks. When Council brought down its first budget, we announced an unprecedented investment in roads and sidewalks. We invested over 1 million dollars in road rehabilitation and sidewalks each year during our term, with a particular focus on sidewalk construction in school zones.

Your Worship, Budget 2021 will continue with this focus through a significant investment in two major roads. Using money made available through Gas Tax allocations, Council will invest \$2.5 million to widen and upgrade Minerals Road, as well as to install a sidewalk along with curb and gutter from Peacekeepers Way to Country Path Road. Once this work is complete, all four major collector roads between Route 60 and Peacekeepers Way – Fowlers Road, Legion Road, Lawrence Pond Road and Minerals Road – will have seen significant enhancements during this Council's four-year term.

In addition, through participation in the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program and working with our Federal and Provincial Governments, the Town will be spending another 1 million dollars to upgrade Anchorage Road. This will include roughly 1.5 kilometres of paving from Peacekeepers Way overpass to Minerals Road.

Throughout its mandate, our Council invested 17 million dollars in road upgrading, paving and sidewalks. This resulted in 21.5 kilometres of paving upgrades to 36 streets; 42 square kilometres of rehabilitation to 128 streets; and the installation of some 3,000 metres of sidewalks. I am pleased to say that we are not stopping there. Budget 2021 will see a further investment of 750 thousand dollars in road rehabilitation and sidewalks. By the end of our mandate, Council will have invested a total of approximately 21.4 million dollars in roads and sidewalks, an unprecedented commitment.



Some people come for the ocean views, others aim higher.

Council has worked closely with our MHAs, as well as our Member of Parliament and the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to upgrade the main thoroughfares of Conception Bay South, Peacekeepers Way and Route 60. This significant amount of work has enhanced the safety and quality of life for our residents, contributed to a more efficient commute for the motoring public and improved attractiveness for business investment.

Your Worship, Council doesn't want to just see better roads; we want to ensure our roads are as safe as possible. Council has already directed staff to immediately accelerate the acquisition of additional traffic calming measures using available funds from this year's budget. Budget 2021 will augment these measures with an additional 40 thousand dollars and by the end of our mandate, we anticipate having spent more than 350 thousand dollars on traffic calming measures. Again, the most important money we can spend is on ensuring the safety of our residents.

With safety as a key priority, Council will also continue with its 24-hour, 7 days per week snow removal and ice control program during the snow season. Many residents provided incredibly positive feedback on this initiative and we are delighted to continue it in 2021 at a cost of \$1.7 million.

At this time I would like to reflect back on Council's decision to automate garbage collection. The program was 50 percent implemented in 2018 and completely implemented by the Fall of 2019, ahead of schedule.

One of the primary drivers for implementing automated waste collection was to better protect the safety of our Waste Collection Equipment Operators. In the two years prior to automation we experienced eight lost time incidents. There has only been one lost time incident over the last two years and we are very proud of that outcome.

I would also like to commend our staff for their significant improvements in overall safety performance. Over the last year alone, we have moved from 11 lost time incidents across the organization to five this year. While we are well on our way to achieving our goal of being an incident-free workplace, we have made significant progress and I encourage all staff to remain vigilant and be safe. Council fully supports everyone's right to a safe workplace and we encourage our staff to continue to complete safety observations as they discharge their duties.

Priority 3: Inclusive, Accessible Community Park Development

Council's third major priority involved the construction of a new inclusive, accessible community park – something that has been on the books since 2016 when the Town first acquired property within the downtown core. Council completed Phase 1 of the Community Park earlier this month. A new parking lot was built, the inclusive playground was installed along with a new swing set and walking trails graded for accessibility were constructed.



A fun and affordable place to raise a family.

Budget 2021 will finance Phase 2 of the Community Park, including the installation of a dual water park and ice skating surface and installation of lighting and a stage. Phase 2 will also include construction of new changerooms and washrooms as well as storage space for equipment and mechanical outfitting.

The total investment for Phase 2 will be 2.5 million dollars. This investment would not be possible without Federal and Provincial Government support of our application for funding under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program.

Priority 4: Public Library

Finally, Council's fourth priority was to see the construction of a much needed new library for the residents of Conception Bay South. It was Council's hope to have construction commence in 2020 but due to COVID-19, we decided to defer until 2021. However, we have continued to advance this file by awarding a contract for the design of the new 8,000 square foot facility earlier this year. With input from the provincial and local library boards, the design work is well advanced.

Earlier this month, Council also awarded the contract for construction of the facility, which is expected to start in the spring with a plan of opening to the public in 2022. This will be a wonderful addition to our suite of recreational and visitor-oriented facilities and we are looking forward to cutting the ribbon with our partners, including the Department of Education on this important project. We are sure it will be well worth the wait.

Government Support

Your Worship, while we are proud to say that we have delivered on our commitments, we could not have done so without the support and commitment of our area MHAs and MP. The Provincial and Federal governments share our vision for a bright future for the Town of Conception Bay South and continue to be there for us when we need them. We would never have been able to deliver on our commitments without their support, particularly when our revenues have been impacted in such a severe manner. Our Governments recognized the hardship the pandemic has had on municipalities across the country and established a Safe Restart Fund to help us transition through this difficult time. This 1.5 million dollars in funding greatly complemented Council's efforts to manage our financial matters, enabling us to deliver a balanced budget of 37.2 million dollars.

Fostering Continued Growth

Despite all the adversaries our province is facing, the Town of Conception Bay South continues to grow. Council has worked incredibly hard to make our beautiful community an excellent place for people to live and raise their families. Knowing that 2020 was going to be difficult on families in particular, Council made a decision to eliminate two fees to reduce the burden on residents.

First, to help families wanting to build a new home, we eliminated the fee for New Home Construction Permits. Second, to support families wanting to upgrade their home, we waived fees for permits to repair and improve



A growing town, in more ways than one.

residents' homes, including extensions, decks, sheds, fences and general repairs. These initiatives were very well received by residents. To date, we have seen construction commence on 74 new homes, which is very remarkable given that prior to the start of the pandemic in March, construction had commenced on only two homes.

Similarly, data on new permits shows a 30% increase in permits to date this year for residential upgrades, such as sheds, decks, windows and siding.

As a result of positive feedback and this uptake, I am very pleased to announce that we will be waiving both of these permit fees again in Budget 2021.

Additional Investments, Enhancements & Initiatives

The Town of Conception Bay South continues to position itself as the community of choice in this province. Council views the spike in home renovations and increase in home sales as an acknowledgement that our community is a safe haven at a time in which safety and quality of life are at a premium. Summer 2020 saw huge numbers of people flocking to Topsail Beach to enjoy the sunset or a day in the sun. Council appreciates that such high volumes of traffic can be intrusive on area residents, so Council invested in increased signage and staffing to ensure increased traffic is managed as efficiently as possible. Council will continue to explore further options to better manage traffic for this area in 2021.

As a result of the pandemic and the immediate need for social distancing, I am proud to report that the

Town increased its investment in becoming a more digital government. This involved launching a new website and investing in new technologies such as online booking, online payment capabilities and online permitting and applications to deliver improved, streamlined customer experiences and transform the way we do business. These efforts will continue in 2021.

Additionally, in an effort to improve transparency and digital service, we invested 30 thousand dollars so Council meetings can be broadcast real-time, allowing residents to watch their elected officials in action. Council meetings are also recorded and shared via social media so residents can watch meetings from their homes and at their convenience.

Increasing opportunities to get outside and enjoy the beauty of our Town became a priority in support of our physical and mental health in 2020 as social distancing became the new normal. The Town's Tourism Development Strategy kicked into high gear with the development of maps, guides and videos to highlight existing trails and tourism assets within the Town.

The East Coast Trail Longshore Path underwent significant upgrades this year and the hike to Topsail Bluff will see tremendous enhancements which will likely make it a definite must-do item for hikers in 2021 and beyond.

Visitors marveled at the newly developed network of trails along Manuels River with counts averaging

25,000 trail users per month, reaching peak counts of 30,000 during the summer. Council is looking forward to continuing to support the Manuels River Connect the Trails Campaign on a cost-shared basis in conjunction with other private and public funders.

Council is also pleased to continue to support the Manuels River Hibernia Interpretation Centre with an annual operating grant contribution of 120 thousand dollars in support of the long-term sustainability of this tremendous tourism asset in the Town.

In 2020, we were pleased to initiate the detailed engineering design on the remaining four kilometers of T’Railway in Seal Cove. Once complete, we will endeavor to secure funding for the continued development and completion of this multi-year project. Our T’Railway has become a world-class destination trail for pedestrians and cyclists, providing 14 kilometres of coastline views and forested, rural and urban experiences.

Since its initiation in late 2018, the ATV Committee led by enthusiastic ATV community volunteers, with the support of Council, has made great strides in promoting the safe use of ATVs in our community. We will continue to work together with diligence and patience on the establishment of an ATV Trail within the region. Council remains committed to this project and has supported the submission of an application to Crown Lands with a goal of securing a proposed route for this ATV Trail.

Conclusion

To conclude, I am incredibly proud of all that our Town collectively accomplished together during the unprecedented and challenging year we faced. I would like to acknowledge our dedicated staff, both management and those representing CUPE Local 3034 and express many thanks for their efforts. I would also like to acknowledge the Director of Finance for her continued efforts in steadfast financial management and in preparation of the 2021 municipal budget.

By the end of this Council’s four-year term, we will have accomplished all that we set out to do. Even when faced with the most challenging times, we have not increased any taxes or fees and we will have continued to reduce spending four years in a row. I am proud to stand here and say that we have made significant headway on Council’s four major priorities to date, all of which will be completed or nearing completion by the end of our term.

We had some difficult but responsible decisions to make for Budget 2021 but I am confident that this

budget will see our Town continue to grow stronger and more vibrant in the year ahead as we head into the final year of this Council’s mandate.

Your Worship, next week during our public meeting I will be presenting a motion in which the Town of Conception Bay South will be presenting a balanced budget for fiscal year 2021 in the amount of 37.2 million dollars and respectfully ask my Council colleagues to vote on it at that time.

Until then, I ask everyone to continue to be safe and follow the guidelines for living with COVID-19 as established by the Federal and Provincial Governments. It is the hope of Council that with recent developments of possible vaccines that the end of the pandemic is on the horizon and that before long, we will all be enjoying the spectacular sunsets that are synonymous with Conception Bay South, in close proximity with friends and family without the worry of this terrible virus. We just need to remain vigilant a little while longer.

Thank you.

For more
information
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Bright town. Bright future.

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