



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lethbridge County Council approves 2021 budget

LETHBRIDGE COUNTY- Lethbridge County Council has approved both the 2021-2023 Operating and 2021-2025 Capital Budgets at today's Council meeting.

The Operating Budget expense totals \$28,050,645 for 2021, while the Capital Budget amounts to \$9,215,000. The total tax support increase for 2021 is projected at 0.973%, just under one percent and 0.109% after assessment growth.

"This has certainly been a challenging budget to put together," says Chief Administrative Officer, Ann Mitchell. "We saw a large reduction in grant funding for 2021 and paired with significant costs downloaded to us by the Province, we had some tough decisions to make. Administration worked diligently to find as many efficiencies as possible while still maintaining a high level of service for our citizens and businesses."

In addition to expected expenses, Lethbridge County is required by the Province through the Inter-Municipal Collaboration Framework Agreements to pay for recreation funding to municipalities within its boundaries. The 2021 Recreation funding per the agreements is \$253,750. Policing costs for Lethbridge County in 2021 were increased by \$117,540 from the 2020 allocation to \$352,106. The County's share of the Agricultural Services Operational Grant by \$136,630. These costs alone add an additional 2.475% to the required tax support before any other cost adjustments, efficiencies or other savings are realized. After a thorough review of each department's expenditures, Senior Staff was able to identify \$516,195 in cost savings and efficiencies to minimize the impact on taxpayers. These efficiencies include staff restructuring, alternative funding options and adjusting expenses to align with departmental historical averages.

Several capital projects have been included in the budget for 2021, with some of the larger projects including improvements to roads, such as re-surfacing Range Road 19-2, reconstruction to Range Road 22-4 and Broxburn Road paving. The continuation of the Malloy Drain project near Coaldale, two bridge replacements, and playground equipment replacement in Monarch were also included.

"Council and Administration recognize that 2020 was a very difficult year," says Reeve Lorne Hickey. "It was a priority throughout the budget process to ensure that tax increases were as minimal as possible. If we did not have these extra costs imposed on us by the Province, we would have been able to achieve a tax decrease of approximately 1.5% for 2021. Looking forward, we have many operational and capital projects that will improve both quality of life for our citizens and allow our businesses to operate more efficiently."

The full budget document is available to view on the Lethbridge County website at <https://lethcounty.ca/p/budget-2021>