

Town of Cobourg Council Approves 2025 Capital and Operating Budget

Cobourg, ON (January 10, 2025) – At the Wednesday, December 18, 2024 Regular Council meeting, Council approved the 2025 Capital Budget in the amount of \$111,482,784 and Operating Budget of \$25,128,070 with a Municipal Levy of \$32,688,195 which represents a 6.55% increase over the 2024 Operating Budget and a 5.23% net increase after allowing for new assessment growth of 2.32% and an infrastructure levy of 1.00%.

Pro-active Budgeting to Ensure Long-Term Sustainability

The Town of Cobourg Strategic Plan 2023 - 2027 and Beyond sets out to enhance the Town of Cobourg's financial and asset management plans to provide appropriate levels of services and ensure long-term sustainability. "When dealing with millions of dollars of infrastructure, we must take a proactive approach to financial planning, so we are not creating undue burden on the tax base," says Mayor, Lucas Cleveland. "The progress we are making through improved financial and asset management reporting has given us the foresight to set aside the appropriate funding to address key infrastructure requirements as they arise."

The 2025 Budget deliberations followed a new format and timeline with the goal to approve the budget by January 2025. The 2025 Budget process began on August 1, with the release of the draft budget and initiation of phase one community engagement. In response to resident feedback and to improve community engagement practices, the Town of Cobourg introduced Council Budget Information Sessions to the 2025 budget engagement strategy. Over a four-week period, Council hosted meetings with members of the public where they received questions and recommendations for the 2025 budget. The divisional staff budget presentations took place the week of October 28 and outlined community engagement results, key operating and capital budget drivers, special projects, cost avoidance and savings initiatives. "The approval of the 2025 budget in advance of Q1, ensures that staff can make the best use of budget dollars and take advantage of cost savings by being early to market on major capital projects," says Mayor, Lucas Cleveland.

Increased Funding Through Community Grants

As per the recommendation of the Organizational Review, the Town of Cobourg introduced the position of a Grant and Policy Writer. This position has increased the Town's capacity to seek outside funding for capital projects and community programs. In 2024, Council advanced this initiative through advocacy work, seeking meetings and making delegations to upper tiers of government. "In 2024 the Town of Cobourg received a record amount of funding through provincial and federal grants, including \$25 million in water infrastructure from the provincial governments Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund, says Mayor, Lucas Cleveland.

“As you will see with the 2025 budget, staff have made great effort to offset major capital costs through external funding, meaning Cobourg will be able to complete a remarkable amount of work this year, without additional strain on the tax base.”

Improving Financial Sustainability Through Increased Reserve Spending:

A key performance indicator identified in 2024 was to increase the Town of Cobourg's reserves. Financial sustainability refers to the ability to provide and maintain service and infrastructure levels without resorting to unplanned increases in tax rates or reductions in service. New to the 2025 budget strategy is the introduction of a 1% infrastructure levy. Cobourg, like other communities across Ontario, faces the ongoing task of replacing aging infrastructure. The introduction of a 1% dedicated infrastructure levy will assist the Town of Cobourg build appropriate reserves to address these major budget items as they develop.

2025 Capital Projects at a Glance

Cobourg residents can look forward to the following community development programs in 2025.

Transit Stop Improvements

Budget required - \$20,000

Funded by: Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) \$14,666, tax levy \$5,334

To improve accessibility at existing transit stops, Council has approved minor construction work such as curb cuts and concrete pad installations.

Bi-Annual Sidewalk Program

Budget Required: \$75,000

Funded by: Tax levy

As per the Town of Cobourg Official Plan and Transportation Master Plan, new sidewalk projects are approved annually through the budget process. Sidewalks are completed on a two-year work cycle, with designs completed in year one and construction in year two.

The Sidewalk Priority Plan is used to determine precedence. The following areas have been approved to enter the design process in 2025:

- Heath Street, from William to Burnham
- University Ave E, from D'Arcy to Campbell
- University Ave E, from Campbell to Major
- Munroe St, from Division St to 200m east of Division St

Anne Street Reconstruction

Budget required - \$840,000

Funded by: Town of Cobourg Sanitary Reserve \$180,000, Town of Cobourg Stormwater Reserve \$50,000, Debenture \$610,000,

Council has approved the full reconstruction of Anne Street due to poor underground infrastructure. Anne Street currently experiences frequent water main breaks, poor water volume, and a sanitary sewer that cannot be camera inspected due to the sewer condition.

Bi-Annual Sanitary Replacement

Budget required - \$ 200,000

Funded by: Town of Cobourg Sanitary Reserve \$ 200,000

The Bi-annual sanitary replacement program is an ongoing joint program with Lakefront Utility Services Inc. (LUSI). The project identified for 2025 is John Street sanitary sewer from James St E to University Ave E.

William Street Bridge Rehabilitation

Budget required - \$825,000 (\$2.1M previously approved)

Funded by: Canadian Community-Building Fund \$643,349, Debenture \$181,651

The 2020 Ontario Structure Inspection Manual report identified William Street bridge in poor condition and high priority for repair. The William Street bridge rehabilitation project will include a new deck surface, widened sidewalks, and repaired concrete bridge components including a 3m wide multi-use-path on the east side of the bridge. The construction contract has been combined with the King Street West Culvert Replacement and has been approved by Council for award. Construction is expected to commence early in 2025.

King Street West Culvert Replacement

Budget required - \$1,800,000

Funded by: Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program \$1,244,096, Town of Cobourg Sanitary Reserve \$11,000, Town of Cobourg Stormwater Reserve \$544,904

The Town of Cobourg was successful in receiving funding through the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) in 2019. The construction contract has been combined with the William Street Bridge Rehabilitation and has been approved by Council for award. Construction is expected to commence early in 2025.

For a full review of the budget, visit the Budget and Finance page on Cobourg.ca

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About The Town of Cobourg

The Town of Cobourg is a lakeside community (population 20,500) located on the north shore of Lake Ontario halfway between Toronto and Kingston and has been recognized multiple times by MoneySense Magazine as "One of Canada's Best Places to Live" in populations under 25,000.

Founded in 1798, Cobourg is rich in heritage offering a vibrant downtown, sophisticated small-town atmosphere and renowned waterfront that serves as a popular getaway destination. As the largest town in Northumberland County, Cobourg is personified by historic Victoria Hall, a 143,000 sq. ft. multiple purpose community centre, an educated and skilled labour force, flourishing commercial sector and supportive municipal government. Cobourg has received the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Sustainable Communities Award, accolades from the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance, and multiple heritage, environmental, and event awards.