

## Report to Council

**Report Title:** 2025 Budget Consultation Feedback

**Prepared By:** Sarah Johnson, Deputy Clerk and Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer

**Department:** Finance

**Date:** November 12, 2024

**Report Number:** FIN2024-32                      **File Number:** C11FIN, F05

### Attachments:

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### Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby receives Report Number FIN2024-32 – 2025 Budget Consultation Feedback, prepared by Sarah Johnson, Deputy Clerk and Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer for information purposes.

### Report:

#### Background:

The Municipality of Brockton launched the 2025 Budget Consultation project on our community engagement website, Build Your Brockton on September 18, 2024. The 2025 Budget Consultation project includes information about how the Municipality develops its budget, municipal tax payments, and property tax bill information.

The project also included the key dates of the 2025 Budget Meetings, Budget FAQ's, a News Feed. Members of the public were also able to interact with the staff through three platforms: a 2025 Budget Survey, Q&A, and Ideas tool.

#### Analysis:

Staff communicated about the 2025 Budget Consultation project through the Municipal website, social media, Council Agendas, and Brockton Buzz Newsletters.

Staff have analyzed the data received from the public regarding the 2025 Budget Consultation project, and provided a summary of statistics for Council's consideration.

### Overall Engagement:

The 2025 Budget Consultation project launched on Build Your Brockton had a total of 163 visits, 33 engaged visitors, 67 informed visitors, 141 aware visitors, including a maximum number of 20 visitors per day. Out of

the 33 engaged participants, 32 participated in the Budget Survey, 1 individual submitted an idea for consideration, and no individuals asked a question.

Out of the 67 informed participants, 34 visited multiple project pages, 33 contributed to a tool (becoming an engaged participant), 8 downloaded a document (2024 Tax Dollar), 2 viewed the FAQ's, and 1 viewed the Key Dates (2025 Budget Meeting dates). The 141 aware visitors simply visited the project page.

The 2024 Tax Dollar was uploaded to the page, as well as the Understanding Municipal Taxation document, and Understanding Your Municipal Budget document which have been provided on previous years' Budget Consultation projects.

Further information on the 2025 Municipal Budget will be uploaded to this project later in the Winter, including the Draft Tax Supported Budget, Draft Non-Tax Supported Budget, Special Council Meeting Agendas, and Council Meeting Video Recordings.

The 2025 Budget Consultation project page on Build Your Brockton was viewed through 4 different sources of traffic: through social media, through site referrals such as eSCRIBE (Council Agendas), directly through the Build Your Brockton site, and through search engines (example: Google).

**2025 Budget Survey Feedback:**

The anonymous budget survey was available from September 18, 2024 to November 4, 2024 consisting of 15 questions. The survey questions have remained the same for over 4 years.

A total of 32 individuals completed the 2025 survey.

Total Survey Participation 2025	Total Survey Participation 2024 Comparison	Total Survey Participation 2022 Comparison	Total Survey Participation 2021 Comparison	Total Survey Participation 2020 Comparison
<b>32 participants</b> (Launched Sept 18 to Nov 4)	63 participants (Launched Aug 22 to Sept 18)	91 participants (launched Jan 7 to Feb 3)	77 participants (launched Dec 1 to Feb 15)	24 participants (launched Jan 20 to Feb 21)

**Demographics:**

Out of those 32 participants, 46.8% were between the ages of 31-50 years, 25% were between the ages of 51-64 years, 15.6% were age 30 and under, 12.5% were between the ages of 65 and above.

59.3% of respondents own urban residential property in Brockton, 28.1% own rural residential property, 12.5% own agricultural property, 9.3% own commercial property, and 9.3% own multi-residential (owner or tenant) properties. (Note: Residents were able to choose more than one type of property should they own multiple properties)

**Sources of Information for Budget:**

Respondents identified that their top three sources for information about the Municipality's budget were:

- 1) Municipal website (84.3%)
- 2) Municipal social media accounts (50%)

3) Local newspaper or radio (18.75%)

Of note, 6.2% of respondents identified that they have not looked for budget information before.

**Familiarity of Budget Process:**

Somewhat Familiar	Minimally Familiar	Very Familiar	Not Familiar
59.3%	18.7%	15.6%	6.2%

**Programs and Services:**

Respondents identified that the value of programs and services received for their tax dollars were good (34.3%), fair (34.3%), poor (15.6%), and very good (9.3%).

Residents also identified their familiarity with the services and programs paid for with their tax dollars:

Somewhat Familiar	Very Familiar	Not Familiar
56.2%	40.6%	3.1%

When asked to rank their preference for options of dealing with increased costs to pay for Municipal services, respondents identified their most desired option as increasing user fees. (Note: 1 is most preferred 6 is least preferred)

Options	Rank
Increase user fees	1
Combination of increase in property taxes and user fees	2
Combination of cutting service levels and small increase in taxes and user fees	3
Cut existing service levels to maintain current taxes	4
Cut existing service levels to reduce taxes	5
Increase property taxes	6

Residents were asked to identify whether they would support an increase in user fees for the following services. Residents supported an increase in user fees for all four services, though the results were almost tied for Child Care (17 voted support, 15 voted do not support).

Service	Support
Recreation (Ex. Rentals, Programs)	Yes
Landfill (Ex. Tipping Fees)	Yes
Cemetery (Ex. Plot, Columbarium, Niche Purchases)	Yes
Child Care (Ex. Program Fees)	Yes

Residents were also asked to indicate if they would enhance, maintain or reduce the following 6 service areas portion of municipal taxes:

Service	Overall Preference
Parks and Recreation	Maintain
Landfill	Maintain
Police	Maintain
Public Works (Roads/Operations)	Maintain

Service	Overall Preference
Utilities	Maintain
General Government (Administrative)*	Maintain/Reduce

\*General Government (Administrative) had 16 votes to reduce, 14 votes to maintain, and 2 votes to enhance.

Residents were further asked to rate their satisfaction of with the delivery of the Municipality’s various services, and identified their satisfaction, or neutral opinion with the applicable services provided; although there is dissatisfaction on the Annual Property Tax Amount.

Service	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Neutral	Unsatisfied	Not Applicable (I do not use this service)
Wastewater and Water	8	9	7	0	8
Stormwater Management and Drainage	7	10	8	0	7
Fire Prevention and Emergency Services	14	13	4	0	1
Police Service	6	13	6	6	1
By-Law Enforcement	3	4	13	9	3
Garbage and Recycling	8	13	7	3	0
Recreation Facilities	9	8	6	4	2
Providing/Maintaining Greenspaces and Trails	8	16	5	3	0
Residential, Commercial, Industrial Development	10	8	10	4	0
Roads for all types of Transportation	5	14	7	6	0
Streetlights, Sidewalks, and Paths	2	13	10	5	2
Annual Property Tax Amount	0	7	8	17	0

When asked **what information residents would like to receive from the Municipality that they are currently not receiving**, respondents provided summarized suggestions of the following:

- How the Municipality will support low-income individuals through subsidy programs? – The Municipality does participate in Bruce County’s subsidy program through the Brockton Child Care Centre and makes property tax payment arrangements with eligible individuals. Otherwise, this type of program is not offered at a Municipal level, instead, the responsibility of the County or Province.
- Crime reports – The South Bruce O.P.P. provide crime statistics to the OPP Detachment Board, and annually to Brockton Council.
- Reason for tax increases if applicable / “Detailed report provided to taxpayers outlining where all the money is going to in the budget” – Budget Meetings are held annually to deliberate the proposed annual budget and minutes are available for the public to review why tax increases were implemented. The Budget is included on these Council Agendas, posted to our website, and the Tax Dollar showing

where all tax dollars are spent within each budget is also included on our website and in the Tax editions of the Brockton Buzz.

- Amount spent on legal fees (example: Saugeen Municipal Airport) – Accounts are included on every Council Agenda indicating where money is being spent in each department
- What is the plan for additional water supply to service the town’s growth? – The Municipality approved a Master Servicing (Water/Wastewater) Plan in April 2024 and B.M. Ross and Associates Ltd. are conducting an Environmental Assessment for our water systems taking this growth into account.
- Recreation Program schedules on social media and community digital boards – The Municipality advertises recreation programs on our social media and website as well as physical posters throughout the community, such as the Post Office, Municipal Office, and Arena bulletin boards. There are a limited number of “digital boards” in Brockton and most require a cost for advertising.
- “Employee compensation and number of new positions created in last 5 years”

### **Budget Considerations / Future Planning:**

Respondents were asked to identify their **top 3 most important concerns** facing the Municipality at this time.

The top 3 concerns were:

- 1) Growth, development and sustainability
- 2) Roads, drainage, streetlights, sidewalks etc.
- 3) Property taxes

Followed closely by public health and mental health.

Globally, there continue to be impacts following the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the increase in inflation.

Residents were asked to identify their opinion on **how the Municipality should continue to respond to continued pressures**. The options preferred by residents are ranked below:

- 1) Capital projects should be delayed
- 2) Modest tax rate increase to offset revenue losses and ensure service continuity
- 3) Appreciation for how the Municipality has been mitigating these pressures
- 4) Changes to existing services

When asked to provide **ideas for the development of future parks, trails and outdoor green spaces**, residents suggested including:

- Increased maintenance (grass cutting, trail grading)
- Accessibility for all users
- Upgraded playground equipment, and maintenance of existing parks
- Increased garbage and recycling along the trails
- Fenced in dog trail / A dog park – \*The pilot project Dog Park at Lobies Park continues until May 2025 with opportunities for a permanent location being explored.
- Increased trees
- Lighting
- Interconnected trail network for cycling/walking that connects to “city hubs”
- “Developers should be providing more money to include parks in residential areas”

- Improved drainage at Elmwood Lions Park – \*The Elmwood Community Centre Board owns the park, which is also a joint Board of Brockton and the Municipality of West Grey. The Board will be including this concern as a capital project in the 2025 Budget which would need to be approved by both Councils.

When asked to provide **ideas on how to build a better, stronger, community**, residents suggested:

- Increased community involvement/events:
  - Suggestions of more community BBQ's, and events by-donation
  - "Youth mentoring programs and projects to involve them in our communities well being."
  - "Showcase our local talent, music, dance, etc."
  - "Supporting ventures that ALL can participate in. Rec has been doing great with increased community offerings."
  - "Better integration between service clubs/associations/teams and the Municipality"
- Increase employment opportunities, increased commercial/retail businesses, "encourage industries to settle in our area", "encourage nuclear suppliers to Brockton"
- Inclusivity / Diversity
- Consider a recreation / wellness centre (not limited to sports)
- Increase physician recruitment
- "More diversity on Council" / "Maintain a Council with people of elite character"
- Engagement with rural communities / Increased Council representation and attendance among rural communities
- "Delay capital and focus on sustaining current operations within minimal increase. Greater support to all staff for their hardwork."
- Reduce spending and taxes
- Decrease property taxes
- Affordable housing for lower income individuals
- Increased By-Law and Police Enforcement to reduce crime / "Bring back local police" rather than OPP

In summary, Brockton residents are continuing to enjoy the programs and services provided, with a focus on building back community supports/encouraging more volunteerism, encouraging more diversity/inclusivity, and accessibility for community events, the range of businesses in our community, and the development of future parks.

Residents also acknowledge the need to plan ahead as Brockton is starting to experience more growth. Residents are cognisant in ensuring we maintain/improve our infrastructure, manage our assets, and work on solutions to address global problems (such as affordable housing, physician recruitment/hospital staffing shortages, crime).

## Next Steps:

Staff thank the respondents for completing the 2025 Budget Survey and sharing their participation on our community engagement website. The feedback will be considered by Senior Staff and incorporated into the development of the 2025 Budget.

Council will hold Special Council Meetings to consider the 2025 Municipal Budget on Tuesday, January 13, 2025 at 10:00 a.m., Wednesday, January 14, 2025 at 1:00 p.m. and Tuesday, February 11, 2025 at 1:00 p.m.

Once the Budget is formally approved, a Press Release will be shared with the community, and the 2025 Budget Consultation project will be archived on Build Your Brockton shortly afterwards.

## Strategic Action Plan Checklist:

What aspect of the Brockton Strategic Action Plan does the content/recommendations in this report help advance?

- Recommendations help move the Municipality closer to its Vision Yes
- Recommendations contribute to achieving Heritage, Culture, and Community Yes
- Recommendations contribute to achieving Quality of Life Yes
- Recommendations contribute to achieving Land Use Planning and the Natural Environment Yes
- Recommendations contribute to achieving Economic Development Yes
- Recommendations contribute to achieving Municipal Governance Yes

## Financial Impacts/Source of Funding:

- Do the recommendations represent a sound financial investment from a sustainability perspective?  
N/A

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## Respectfully Submitted by:



Sarah Johnson, Deputy Clerk



Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer

## Reviewed by:



Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer