



Supplemental Information to Report CF-23-25

Date: June 21, 2023

To: Oshawa City Council

From: Michelle Bretherick, Director, Finance Services

Stephanie Sinnott, Commissioner, Corporate and Finance Services/Treasurer

Re: Additional information related to Report CF-23-25: Public Engagement Initiatives – 2024 Budget

File No: 03-05

1. Purpose

On May 1, 2023, Oshawa City Council considered Report CF-23-25 and recommended that it “be referred back to staff for a report.”

The purpose of this memo is to provide additional information with respect to budget engagement initiatives.

Report CF-23-25 is to be considered in conjunction with this memo.

2. Input from Other Sources

The following municipalities were consulted in at least one budget benchmarking exercise:

- | | | | |
|--------------|----------------|----------------|------------|
| • Ajax | • Guelph | • Oakville | • Toronto |
| • Aurora | • Halton Hills | • Ottawa | • Vaughan |
| • Brampton | • Hamilton | • Pickering | • Waterloo |
| • Brantford | • Kitchener | • Peterborough | • Whitby |
| • Burlington | • London | • Sarnia | • Windsor |
| • Cambridge | • Markham | • Scugog | • York |
| • Clarington | • Newmarket | | Region |

3. Background

In the past, the City of Oshawa has offered a variety of budget public engagement initiatives for residents, including feedback forms, simulation-based tools, virtual or live phone calls, and more. Participation and engagement in online and phone-based tools has always exceeded in-person engagement opportunities. See a comparison of City of Oshawa attendance/participation in budget public engagement initiatives since 2018 in **Figure 1**.

Benchmarking completed in early 2022 of municipal budget public engagement practices in Ontario indicated that the majority of respondents (63 per cent) launched public engagement between September and December.

Benchmarking completed in spring 2023 indicated that the majority of the reviewed municipalities (80 per cent) had not yet launched their 2024 budget public engagement.

The Corporate Communications branch is facing increasing demands and as a result does not have the staff capacity to launch budget public engagement prior to fall 2023.

4. Proposed 2024 Public Engagement Initiatives

Public engagement initiatives proposed in Report CF-23-25 are reflective of:

- industry best practices;
- benchmarking of municipal comparators;
- increased participation in the City's budget engagement tools for the 2023 budget; and,
- staff capacity.

Corporate Communications is able to deliver the public engagement initiatives as outlined in CF-23-25. By using the same engagement initiatives again for the 2024 Budget public engagement, the community will build familiarity with the tools, and in turn increase confidence and overall participation.

5. Timing

Report CF-23-25 recommended the following public engagement initiative timeline for the 2024 Budget cycle:

- Taxpayer Receipt be available year-round, and updated to reflect the most recent City Budget data;
- Budget Simulator be available for a four-week period in fall 2023;
- Telephone Open House occur after the proposed 2024 City Budget has been presented to Council, but before deliberations begin on the evening of Wednesday, November 22; and,
- Question and Answer tool be available on Connect Oshawa once the Budget Simulator opens and close following the approval of the 2024 Budget.

While an earlier launch date on the Budget Simulator is not possible for the 2024 Budget cycle, Council could direct staff to consider a spring Budget Simulator launch for the 2025 Budget public engagement.

6. Next Steps and Recommendation

At the May 1, 2023 City Council meeting, Report CF-23-25 was referred back to staff for a report.

Should Council wish to proceed with the public engagement initiatives set out in that report, the following motion should be moved:

1. That public engagement for the 2024 City Budget, as proposed in Report CF-23-25 "Public Engagement Initiatives – 2024 Budget", dated April 12, 2023, be approved; and,
2. That staff be directed to consult with the Mayor and the Councillors, by Ward, to receive their input.

Figure 1: Comparison of City of Oshawa attendance/participation in budget public engagement initiatives

Budget Cycle	Phone-based Town Hall	Ward-based Budget Meetings	Web-based Town Hall	Budget Simulator online	Budget Simulator paper	Taxpayer Receipt	Feedback Form online	Feedback Form paper	Live Question & Answer	Special Council Meeting
2018	766 listeners			96 submissions	1 submission		3 submissions	0 submissions	6 questions received	10 in-person, 4 written submissions
2019	5,508 listeners			161 submissions	90 submissions		8 submissions	0 submissions	11 questions received	8 in-person, 3 written submissions
2020		91 attended (42 at Ward 1, 10 at Ward 2, 12 at Ward 3, 10 at Ward 4, 17 at Ward 5)					46 submissions	4 submissions		
2021			82 attended				55 submissions	0 submissions		
2022			14 attended				90 submissions	0 submissions		
2023	3,542 listeners			287 submissions (2,745 visits)	0 submissions	3,224 views				



Public Report

To: Corporate and Finance Services Committee

From: Stephanie Sinnott, Commissioner,
Corporate and Finance Services Department

Report Number: CF-23-25

Date of Report: April 12, 2023

Date of Meeting: April 17, 2023

Subject: Public Engagement Initiatives - 2024 Budget

Ward: All Wards

File: 03-05

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this report is to outline and receive approval on the public engagement activities for the 2024 City Budget.

Attachment 1 is an example of the Taxpayer Receipt online tool.

Attachments 2 and 3 are examples of the Budget Simulator online tool.

2.0 Recommendation

That the Corporate and Finance Services Committee recommend to City Council:

That public engagement for the 2024 City Budget, as proposed in Report CF-23-25 "Public Engagement Initiatives – 2024 Budget", dated April 12, 2023, be approved.

3.0 Executive Summary

Not applicable.

4.0 Input From Other Sources

The following sources were consulted during the preparation of this report:

- Corporate Leadership Team
- Corporate Communications

5.0 Analysis

Resident and property owner participation in budget engagement assists the City in making informed decisions that are reflective of public priorities.

City staff recommend that the City of Oshawa offer the same tools as offered in the 2023 Budget Public Engagement to allow residents and property owners to build familiarity with the tools and increase confidence with the tools and overall participation.

5.1 2024 Public Engagement and Timing

City staff recommend a comprehensive engagement plan featuring the following four tools that will educate respondents and gather resident and property owner budget priorities: Taxpayer Receipt, Budget Simulator, the Telephone Open House and Connect Oshawa.

5.1.1 Taxpayer Receipt

Introduced last year, the Taxpayer Receipt informs and educates residents and property owners as to what their tax dollars buy in a familiar format – a receipt. Residents and property owners input data to generate a customized breakdown of how much City programs and services cost them individually. Attachment 1 is an example of the Taxpayer Receipt online tool.

This information-sharing tool will educate residents and property owners as to:

- how much City services cost them individually (value for dollar);
- how their property taxes are allocated between the City, Region of Durham and the Province of Ontario (for education purposes); and,
- the roles and responsibilities of different levels of government.

This tool will be available year-round, and updated to reflect the most recent City Budget data.

5.1.2 Budget Simulator

Budget Simulator allows residents and property owners to share their City budget priorities by attempting to balance “their own” City budget. Participants will be able to increase and/or decrease spending in City programs and services and apply the same adjustments to sources of revenue. Attachment 2 and 3 are examples of the Budget Simulator online tool. Starting values will be based on the Council approved 2023 City Budget.

This simulation-based exercise will provide residents and property owners the opportunity to share their 2024 Budget priorities, as well as educate them on:

- challenges associated with addressing the demand for services while considering financial and other resource constraints;
- how their property taxes are allocated between the City, Region of Durham and the Province of Ontario (for education purposes); and,
- value for City services.

This tool will be available for public engagement for a four-week period in fall 2023.

5.1.3 Telephone Open House

The Telephone Open House will invite Oshawa residents and property owners to join the Mayor, Chair of Corporate & Finance Services Committee and senior City staff on the phone to discuss the proposed 2024 City Budget. On the day of the Telephone Open House, 40,000 Oshawa households and provided mobile numbers will receive a call inviting them to participate in a 60-minute conversation. Communications will take place in advance to advise members of the public that they will be receiving a call and to encourage their participation in the Telephone Open House.

Finance Services will begin the event with a brief overview of the proposed 2024 City Budget and Budget process and then respond to questions submitted prior to and during the Open House. Similar to last year's event, the C.A.O. and Commissioners will answer questions specific to their respective Departments and Directors will be on-site to support with additional information as required.

A recording of the Telephone Open House will be available on the City's website and YouTube channel in the days following the event.

This information-sharing tool will educate residents and property owners on:

- the 2024 Budget process;
- how their property taxes are allocated between the City, Region of Durham and the Province of Ontario (for education purposes);
- the roles and responsibilities of different levels of government; and,
- City programs and services.

The Telephone Open House will occur after the proposed 2024 City Budget has been presented to Council, but before deliberations begin. Staff are proposing the event take place the evening of Wednesday, November 22, 2023.

5.1.4 Connect Oshawa

In addition to hosting web links to both the Taxpayer Receipt and Budget Simulator tools, Connect Oshawa will offer the Question & Answer tool, which allows residents and property owners to ask questions about the 2024 Budget process and proposed 2024 City Budget. Depending on when it was received, a question will be responded to:

- through Connect Oshawa, with responses emailed to the community member who asked the question and, when appropriate, posted publicly on the site; or,
- during the Telephone Open House.

This information-sharing tool will educate residents and property owners about:

- the 2024 Budget process;
- how their property taxes are allocated between the City, Region of Durham and the Province of Ontario (for education purposes);

- the roles and responsibilities of different levels of government; and,
- City programs and services.

The Question & Answer tool will be available on Connect Oshawa once the Budget Simulator opens and close following the approval of the 2024 Budget.

5.2 Promotion

To continue public education and encourage input on the 2024 City Budget, City staff will promote the 2024 Budget public engagement opportunities using a variety of communication channels.

6.0 Financial Implications

If approved as recommended, the estimated cost for public engagement and promotion of the 2024 City Budget is not expected to exceed \$30,000, before H.S.T.:

- | | |
|---|----------|
| • Taxpayer Receipt and Budget Simulator bundle: | \$9,270 |
| • Budget Telephone Open House: | \$10,598 |
| • Promotion: | \$10,000 |

Costs will be funded from the Council approved Finance Services 2023 operating budget.

7.0 Relationship to the Oshawa Strategic Plan

The recommendation advances the Oshawa Strategic Plan goal of Accountable Leadership, specifically the theme of Deliberate Community Engagement.



Stephanie Sinnott, Commissioner,
Corporate and Finance Services Department

Taxpayer Receipt

Image is a screenshot of the 2022 Taxpayer Receipt generated with Oshawa's average assessed property value (\$365,000).

Here's your unofficial taxpayer receipt based on the information you entered.

Invite your friends and family to get their receipt:

[f](#) [t](#) [in](#) [✉](#)

Your 2022 City of Oshawa residential property Tax Receipt

External Agencies, Advisory Committees & Grants	\$184.40
External Agencies	\$160.73
Advisory Committees	\$0.59
Grants	\$11.83
Tribute Communities Centre	\$9.74
Oshawa Executive Airport	\$1.52
Fire Services	\$365.15
Fire Prevention	\$20.69
Training	\$5.93
Fire Suppression	\$297.32
Operational, Maintenance & Mechanical	\$11.59
Communications & Administration	\$29.61
Governance & Support	\$596.73
Governance & Support	\$596.73
Municipal Law Enforcement	\$53.94
By-Law Enforcement & Licensing	\$35.23
Security	\$18.71

Parks, Waste & Maintenance	\$371.79
Parks, Forestry, Playgrounds, Splash Pads	\$136.93
Waste Collection	\$60.49
Winter Control & Snow Operations	\$98.18
Roads & Sidewalk Maintenance	\$76.20
Infrastructure Services	\$169.78
Building & Planning Services	\$54.84
Engineering & Construction	\$54.58
Facility Management Services	\$60.36
Recreation & Culture	\$179.72
Recreation Programs & Special Events	\$57.67
Recreation Maintenance & Customer Services	\$117.90
Culture	\$4.15
Reserve & Capital Contributions	\$168.70
Reserve & Capital Contributions	\$168.70
Total:	\$2,090.21

This estimated residential property tax receipt represents only the City's portion of property taxes collected. The City also collects property taxes on behalf of the Regional Municipality of Durham and the Province for local school boards.

[Learn more about the City Budget.](#)

BalancingAct.

(continued on the right)

Budget Simulator – Revenue

2023 Budget Engagement

You are balanced.

Where the Money Goes

Spending

- External Agencies, Advisory Committees & Grants: \$14.9m >
- Fire Services: \$29.6m >
- Governance and Support: \$48.3m >
- Municipal Law Enforcement: \$4.4m >
- Parks, Waste and Maintenance: \$30.1m >
- Infrastructure Services: \$13.7m >
- Recreation and Culture: \$14.6m >
- Reserve & Capital Contributions: \$13.7m >
- Your Great Idea >

Revenue

Building Permits: \$3.2m >

Taxation and Corporate Revenues: \$166.1m ✓

Property Taxes: \$155.7m ⓘ \$155.7m

Would you maintain, increase or decrease Property Taxes?

☐ Increase by 5% +\$7.8m

☐ Increase by 2.5% +\$3.9m

☒ Maintain

☐ Decrease by 2.5% -\$3.9m

☐ Decrease by 5% -\$7.8m

30
\$155.7m

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Penalties and Interest: \$4.4m ⓘ \$4.4m

Would you maintain, increase or decrease Penalties and Interest?

☐ Increase by 5% +\$221,312

☐ Increase by 2.5% +\$110,658

☒ Maintain

☐ Decrease by 2.5% -\$110,658

☐ Decrease by 5% -\$221,312

30
\$4.4m

Share
Comment

Miscellaneous: \$5.9m ⓘ \$5.9m

Would you maintain, increase or decrease Miscellaneous?

☐ Increase by 5% +\$297,410

☐ Increase by 2.5% +\$148,705

☒ Maintain

☐ Decrease by 2.5% -\$148,705

☐ Decrease by 5% -\$297,410

30
\$5.9m

Share
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Submit

Reset all to start over

Save your progress and share with others.

The City is part of a two-tier government, and as a result collects property taxes on behalf of not only the City, but also the Regional Municipality of Durham and the Province for local school boards. For every dollar collected in 2022, the City kept only 41 cents; approximately 43 cents were allocated to the Region and 16 cents were sent the Province for to local school boards.

For more information and to stay up-to-date on the 2023 City Budget process, visit the [Budget webpage](#) and follow [@OshBudget](#) on Twitter.