



REVISED AGENDA - COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Thursday, February 6, 2025, 9:00 A.M.

COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL, 1 CENTENNIAL SQUARE

The City of Victoria is located on the homelands of the Songhees Nation and Xwsepsum Nation

Meeting will recess for a lunch break between 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m.

Pages

A.	TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	
B.	INTRODUCTION OF LATE ITEMS	
C.	APPROVAL OF AGENDA	
*D.	CONSENT AGENDA	
	<u>Proposals for the Consent Agenda:</u>	
	• E.1 - Council Appointment of External Auditor	
E.	STAFF REPORTS	
E.1	<u>Council Appointment of External Auditor</u>	1
	A report regarding the appointment of the City's external auditor for the financial reporting years 2025-2029.	
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	A report regarding the results of the public input received on the 2025-2029 Draft Financial Plan to help inform Council's budget decisions.	
F.	NOTICE OF MOTIONS	
G.	NEW BUSINESS	
G.1	<u>Council Member Motion: CRD Foodlands Access Service Establishment Bylaw</u>	300
	A Council Member Motion requesting City of Victoria's opposition to the adoption of the Capital Regional District's Bylaw No. 4602 "Foodlands Access Service Establishment Bylaw No. 1, 2024".	
G.2	<u>Council Member Motion: Requesting an Apology from Councillor Caradonna for Stating Councillor Hammond "lied to the public" at the Committee of the Whole Council Meeting January 23, 2025</u>	305
	A report regarding deliberations during the January 23, 2025 Committee of the	

Whole meeting and requesting that Councillor Caradonna make an apology to Councillor Hammond.

H. CLOSED MEETING, IF REQUIRED

I. ADJOURNMENT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE



Committee of the Whole Report
For the Meeting of February 6, 2025

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** January 24, 2024
From: Susanne Thompson, Deputy City Manager/CFO
Subject: Council Appointment of External Auditor

RECOMMENDATION

That Council appoint BDO Canada LLP as the City’s external auditor for the financial reporting years 2025-2029.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Section 169 of the Community *Charter* requires that Council appoint an external auditor for the municipality.

The City’s previous five-year audit contract will expire following the completion of the upcoming 2024 financial statement audit and the City has completed a Request for Proposal (RFP) process to select an auditor for 2025-2029. Staff have evaluated the responses based on the criteria outlined in the RFP and the successful proponent providing the best value to the City is BDO Canada LLP.

Respectfully submitted,

Raymond Lin Jo-Ann O’Connor Susanne Thompson
Manager, Accounting Deputy Director of Finance Deputy City Manager/CFO

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager



Committee of the Whole Report For the Meeting of February 6, 2025

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** January 23, 2025
From: Sheldon Johnson, Director of Communications and Engagement
Subject: 2025 Draft Budget Public Input

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receive this report for information.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the October 24, 2024 Committee of the Whole Meeting, Council directed staff to invite the public to provide input on the 2025-2029 Draft Financial Plan (2025 Draft Budget).

Starting October 25, the 2025 Draft Budget Public Input Opportunity was made available on the City's online Have Your Say engagement platform. The community was invited to provide input on the draft budget in writing by email, mail or drop-off at City Hall or by submitting a video up to five minutes in length by November 17, 2024.

On Thursday, November 14, 2024, Council extended the deadline for public input until December 20, 2024.

The 2025 Draft Budget public input opportunity/deadline extension were communicated via the City's Have Your Say platform, website, stakeholder email, social media channels, print advertising and a public service announcement, resulting in local media coverage.

The City received 187 items of written correspondence over an eight-week period (October 25-December 20, 2024). Analysis of this public input identifies topics that are top of mind for those who chose to provide feedback and the percentages of those who support or oppose each topic.

The top five areas of concern include the **police budget increase**; **increase in property taxes**; **community well-being services**; and **housing initiatives**; with **beautification projects** such as Centennial Square and Government Street and **increasing/maintaining grant funding for community initiatives** tying for fifth place.

The public input augments the engagement that took place from June 3 to August 28, 2024 to identify the community's priorities for investment in 2025. The previous public consultation included a scientifically valid random Ipsos telephone survey with 700 City of Victoria residents and a series of focused budget community conversations co-hosted with eight equity-seeking groups and 86 members of the community they serve.

A public engagement summary, which included the Ipsos Budget Survey report and detailed community conversation meeting notes, was presented to Council at the October 24, 2024 Committee of the Whole for consideration.

PURPOSE

To share the results of the public input received on the 2025-2029 Draft Financial Plan (2025 Draft Budget) to help inform Council's budget decisions.

BACKGROUND

Each year, the City of Victoria establishes funding priorities through its annual budget. Council sets service levels and allocates funding for all City services, programs, projects and initiatives. Council budget decisions are informed by community input on priorities for investment.

Public engagement on the 2025 Draft Budget has included:

- Ipsos Telephone Survey – third-party, scientific sampling of 700 City of Victoria residents, asking about their priorities for investment in 2025 based on Council's Strategic Plan; survey used a combination of land and mobile phone lines (June 2024)
- Community Conversation Series – focused discussions co-hosted with eight equity-seeking organizations, with 86 members of the community participating (July/August 2024)

The co-hosting organizations provided diverse and varied perspectives from across the city and included Silver Threads Service, Victoria Native Friendship Centre, City of Victoria Youth Council, Victoria Disability Resource Centre, Victoria Pride Society, Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness, Peers Victoria Resources Society and Our Place Society.

- Public Input Opportunity – invited the community to provide feedback on the 2025 Draft Budget in writing or video by December 20, 2024, resulting in 187 items of written correspondence over an eight-week period (October 25-December 20, 2024)

At the October 24, 2024 Committee of the Whole Meeting, Council directed staff to invite the public to provide input on the 2025-2029 Draft Financial Plan (2025 Draft Budget).

Starting October 25, the 2025 Draft Budget Public Input Opportunity was made available on the City's online Have Your Say engagement platform. The community was invited to provide input on the draft budget in writing by email, mail or drop off at City Hall or by submitting a video up to five minutes in length by November 17, 2024. Council extended the public input deadline to December 20 at the November 14, 2024 Committee of the Whole Meeting.

ISSUES & ANALYSIS

Analysis of the public input identifies topics that are top of mind for those who chose to provide feedback and the percentages of those who support or oppose each topic.

The methodology for this analysis included staff reviewing each item of correspondence and logging items of mention in a spreadsheet, to calculate the number of times a topic was mentioned and corresponding percentages in support and opposed to each topic. Details and re-occurring comments were also noted.

What We Heard

Five topics that are top of mind in the written correspondence are:

1. **Police budget increase**
2. **Increase in property taxes**
3. **Community well-being services**
4. **Housing initiatives**
5. **Beautification projects and Increase/maintain grant funding for community initiatives**

A significant number of respondents **support funding**:

- Community well-being services (i.e., health and mental health, harm reduction and support for people who use drugs)
(90 per cent of the 61 mentions)
- Housing initiatives
(96 per cent of the 49 mentions)
- Increase/maintain grant funding for community initiatives (i.e., community gardens, arts, venue spaces, etc.)
(87 per cent of the 46 mentions)

A significant number of respondents **oppose funding**:

- Police budget increase
(83 per cent of the 81 mentions)
- Increase in property taxes
(92% of the 76 mentions)
- Beautification projects
(98 per cent of the 46 mentions)
(Of these 46 mentions, 35 respondents specifically referred to the Centennial Square Revitalization Project, of which 34 (97 per cent) were opposed to funding the project.)

Who We Heard From

Of the 187 correspondence items received:

- 130 (69 per cent) identified as Victoria residents
- 31 (17 per cent) did not specify.
- 17 (nine per cent) were submitted on behalf of a local group or non-profit organization
- 9 (five per cent) identified as business owners

The 17 organizations that provided input include:

- Belfry Theatre
- Canadian Federation of Independent Business
- Capital Bike

- Compost Education Centre
- Fernwood Community + Arts Association
- House of Owl: Creation Lab
- Kaleidoscope Theatre
- Ministry of Casual Living (a non-profit)
- Oaklands Community Association
- Open Space Arts Society
- Pro-Art Alliance of Greater Victoria
- Post Entertainment
- Sanctuary Youth Centre
- Theatre SKAM
- The Other Guise Theatre Company
- Victoria Downtown Residents Association
- Victoria Urban Food Table

Please see Attachment A for the written correspondence and Attachment B for the Topic Analysis Table.

CONCLUSIONS

Engagement on the City's 2025 Draft Budget, which included statistically-valid polling by the nationally-recognized firm Ipsos, focused budget conversations with eight equity-seeking groups and a public input opportunity for the community to provide feedback, demonstrates clear support for Council's priorities in their Strategic Plan, with the top two being Housing and Community Well-Being and Safety.

This three-prong engagement approach provides valuable feedback for the City's 2025 and future-year budget planning, in addition to meeting the statutory requirement for consultation.

Respectfully submitted,

Sheldon Johnson
 Director, Communications and Engagement

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager

List of Attachments:

ATTACHMENT A – Written Correspondence
 ATTACHMENT B – Topic Analysis Table

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Objection to 12 percent
Date: October 25, 2024 9:17:48 PM

Hello City of Victoria,

I think we can all agree that a 12 percent increase is ridiculous. As a homeowner and taxpayer paying already over \$10k per year in taxes, we cannot afford that exorbitant increase. I object to funding SOLID.

Please re examine your priorities and come back with something reasonable that families can afford.

You have an obligation to your taxpayers and citizens to be fiscally responsible and prudent. When you make these kinds of unreasonable increases, rents will go up at the same time as a secondary impact.

Sincerely,
Personal Privacy

Taxpayer
Cell Personal Privacy

Sent from my iPhone

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Draft Budget
Date: October 25, 2024 3:01:52 PM

Hi there,

As a resident of Victoria I'm writing in with my feedback regarding the 2025 draft budget.

I'm really concerned with what a large percentage of the budget is allocated to policing. Police do not prevent crime, they respond to it, and increased policing has disproportionately negative consequences for marginalized community members.

I would much rather see a smaller increase in taxes OR that money being spent on community resources (housing initiatives, the public library, better recreation facilities, etc.) than have a huge tax increase that is being spent on policing. I hope there's still time to reconsider this decisions and think about more upstream solutions rather than increased vigilance.

Thank you for making the opportunity for feedback an option, I appreciate it!

Personal Privacy

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Draft Budget
Date: October 26, 2024 12:15:08 PM

Hello,

I just wanted to provide some feedback on the 2025 Draft Budget. I am a ^{Person} year old renter in Victoria.

Love:

- the **dedicated pickleball space!** This is so needed. There has been a lot of negativity at the tennis courts - some I have experienced personally, when it comes to pickleball. Awesome to give players a place to go.
- **Wider Sidewalks!** Yes! So needed. Especially as our population ages. There are a lot of scooters and walkers out there.
- **Park Upgrades:** Pemberton Park is in my neighborhood. Please consider completely fencing the dog run area

Would love to see

- Some discussion about stagnating library funding. We really need a new Central library. And it would be great to see a branch in Hillside/Quadra or Fernwood/North Park.
- I see parking gets the same slice of the budget as the library which feels crazy. But as far as parking goes I'd love to see bike cages that people could subscribe to or pay to park their bike in within the parking garages. Both secure and dry. This seems like it should be possible as some of them already has private cages. Maybe you could pay for your time with the same app? Or maybe make it free to encourage more cycling downtown. Cycling is the only way I get downtown from Fairfield.
- There is a lot of money going toward the police. I would love to see them do better traffic enforcement. There is a lot of bad driver behavior on including speeding, going through non-car thruways, dangerous driving, aggressive driving. As a pedestrian I also see a lot of people blow through crosswalks. Could we not have cameras if we can't spare the police presence?

Of course, everyone said it and especially renters but the housing costs are very demoralizing. I work a professional job as does my partner. We don't have kids. I can't imagine how people even with our wages which I consider good make a go of it here. Many parents I know have left for other parts of the island or central saanich area. Even for us to imagine purchasing a condo or townhouse is a stretch. There needs to be a way to reserve housing for working people. I have heard Tofnio has lotteries for some housing so that is goes to people who are working in the community. I wonder if this would be possible here. I am not clear if this is a provincial or municipal project.

Thank you for your consideration,
Personal Privacy

Sent with [Proton Mail](#) secure email.

From: [Engagement-External](#)
To: [Michelle Harris](#)
Bcc: [Engagement-External](#)
Subject: FW: Public Input Opportunity Opens on Victoria's 2025 Draft Budget — City of Victoria, Public Service Announcement
Date: October 28, 2024 8:29:00 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

From: Lisa Helps <chair@thefca.ca>
Sent: October 26, 2024 11:20 PM
To: Engagement-External <engage@victoria.ca>
Cc: Lauren Ludwig <lauren.ludwig@thefca.ca>
Subject: Re: Public Input Opportunity Opens on Victoria's 2025 Draft Budget — City of Victoria, Public Service Announcement

Good evening,

Thanks so much for sharing with the Fernwood Community and Arts Association (the FCAA, formerly the FCA), the City's proposed 2025 budget. I've had a quick look through the recreation section and couldn't identify where the proposed potential annual grant to the FCAA to program the Little Fernwood Building (1923 Fernwood) on behalf of the City might be found. I believe Council passed a motion some time early in 2024 directing staff to consider an annual funding amount to the FCAA. We're very grateful to the City for the one-time funding that we've received for 2024 and are putting it to good use with more community use of the building that has happened in decades!

If you could let us know where to find the proposed ongoing grant in the budget and what the proposed amount is, that would be great.

Thanks also for the invite to present to Council on November 14th. We look forward to sharing.

With thanks,

Lisa

FCAA Board Chair

On Fri, Oct 25, 2024 at 11:00 AM Engagement-External <engage@victoria.ca> wrote:



Friday, October 25, 2024 | For Immediate Release

Public Input Opportunity Opens on Victoria's 2025 Draft Budget

VICTORIA, BC — Each year, the City of Victoria's financial planning process provides an opportunity for Council to set service levels and approve an annual budget. You are invited to

provide feedback on the City's 2025 Draft Budget by November 17, 2024.

The City's 2025 Draft Budget proposes to invest \$365.6 million in operating costs and \$94.6 million in capital improvements to continue to deliver more than 200 high-quality services and programs that Victoria residents and businesses depend on.

Visit engage.victoria.ca to see what's proposed for investment next year. You can provide written feedback by email, mail or drop-off at City Hall, or by uploading a pre-recorded video up to five minutes in length.

Budget engagement to date has included a random Ipsos telephone interview survey with 700 City of Victoria residents and a series of focused, budget community conversations co-hosted with eight, equity-seeking organizations and 86 community members they serve.

All budget feedback collected will help inform Council's budget decisions.

Learn more and have your say at engage.victoria.ca.

Media Contact:

Colleen Mycroft

Manager, Intergovernmental and Media Relations

250.896.5325 | cmycroft@victoria.ca

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 draft budget
Date: October 27, 2024 4:25:22 PM

Hello,

I'm writing to express my support for items in the draft budget, in particular the ongoing cycling network improvements and new crosswalks.

The bike route extension up Fort Street has been a huge improvement for access downtown. The crosswalk installed at Redfern and Oak Bay Ave has been a great addition to that street.

The multi-modal corridor improvements look excellent. I'm particularly excited to see the bike lane extension down Oak Bay Ave to Foul Bay Road; that stretch is a real Jesus-take-the-wheel moment as it is.

I would like to see the rest of Pemberton Park fenced; the gaping hole in the fence is a real danger for dogs at the dog park, with a lot of opportunity for dogs to run out into the street (especially with a well-used dog walking route leading to that part of the park that has no fence).

Finally, the traffic enforcement on Richardson Street — from Foul Bay Road all the way to Carnsew Street — is truly nonexistent, and drivers are well aware of this fact. I see illegal turns and illegal entries through the bus/bikeway at Carnsew Street more or less every time I'm on that road. Some dedicated enforcement would be very welcome.

Thanks for taking my feedback.

Sincerely,
[Personal Privacy](#)

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[Personal Privacy](#)

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Feedback on 2025 Draft Budget
Date: October 28, 2024 1:42:19 PM

Hello,

I'm writing in to provide feedback on the proposed 2025 city budget.

The headline of a 12.17% increase in property taxes for 2025 caught my attention. Having looked through the proposed budget as well as the summary sheet below is my feedback.

For some context surrounding my feedback: I own and operate a small business downtown **Personal Privacy** and own property/live downtown. I have lived in Victoria since **Personal Privacy** and have been living downtown since ^{Personal Priva}. I go to shows downtown Vic around 2-4 times/month, live/work/shop between **Personal Privacy** street and am hoping to provide feedback in a clear and constructive manner from someone who lives/works/recreates in Victoria.

This budget proposes that Victoria is looking to rebuild critical infrastructure, bolster policing/public safety, beautify downtown, invest in new recreation facilities and cushion our savings. If city staffers say critical infrastructure is degrading and we need to invest 11 million into reserves and contingencies then it seems to me that this wouldn't be the year to pay 1.5 million dollars for plans to expand the Government Street walkable area or 2.5 million towards a new pickle ball centre.

Bylaw services is the only department that has been able to reduce the cost of their operations from 2024. Before raising property taxes 12%+ I would hope that council would be consulting each department on their efforts to reduce unnecessary spending year to year and look for creative ways to cut costs in ways that wouldn't be affecting employment.

As a resident and business owner downtown, I understand the want to make improvements downtown in an effort to bring more foot traffic/customers downtown, support businesses, etc... I'm of the mind that what is keeping customers home is the fact that the cost of everything is rising. It doesn't matter how nice the side walks are if you can't afford tickets to the show or dinner out. Increasing another fixed cost expense for residents will only make this worse.

I have no issues paying increased taxes that go towards social programming, housing initiatives, harm reduction, projects such as Caledonia Place, etc... I would be happy to pay more for creative and community minded projects, especially those that work towards more accessible housing and treatment for those on our streets. However, I don't think these are the line items that are leading to the large increase this year. I would suggest that we delay larger beautification projects or look for other ways to reduce costs rather than putting such a large increase on taxpayers.

Council approving a 12%+ increase in property taxes would signal to me that taxpayers should not expect support in making life more affordable in this city and sets a precedent that any lack of budgetary planning by the city will be taken on by taxpayers.

My concern is that like everything, these tax rates will never go down. If a 12%+ increase in property taxes is needed due to extraordinary circumstances in 2025, I would suggest that 2026 taxes be capped at a inflation+X%, with X being whatever is deemed reasonable/necessary.

Thanks for your time in considering my feedback.

Cheers,

Personal Privacy

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Fwd: Taxes
Date: October 29, 2024 9:13:27 PM

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Personal Privacy**
Date: Tue, Oct 29, 2024, 12:27 p.m.
Subject: Taxes
To: Victoria Mayor and Council <mayorandcouncil@victoria.ca>

Dear Mayor and Council,

I urge you to take a step back from needless projects at this time. Splash pools and a myriad of other projects while exciting are not what we need to be spending municipal funds on now.

Closing Pandora camping has now resulted in a daytime nightmare of street drug use and disorder. When a person has to leave a shelter in the morning what are they supposed to do? Proper small home housing is the answer not more shelters. This cannot be provided by the municipality alone, however, it is very difficult to see funds spent on unnecessary projects.

We are making the city more beautiful but who is going to appreciate it. Most of us are staying in our own small neighborhoods.

Furthermore, a 12 percent increase in taxes is unconcionable when the CPI is at 2.7 percent. My pension is increased for next year at 2.7 not 12.

Respectfully,

Personal Privacy

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Cc: [Councillors](#)
Subject: As requested...input for the budget 2025/26
Date: October 29, 2024 10:31:12 AM

Good afternoon,

First, thank you for your effort to encourage participation in civic decision making around the budget. I expect that after seeing the results of the provincial election, it is very clear that inviting input from constituents also means being seen to hear it/attend to it/respond to it, vs merely inviting input for 'optics'. To that end, I would request that you consider the following as you 'invite' input on the city's budget.

While I may have a preference for where funding is needed in a general sense, providing useful input is impossible because important information is missing from the budget as featured on the website. We see, in the planned budget, the current budget for 2024 but not the actual "spend" YTD. I lived a business life that required "budget vs actual" reporting MONTHLY and then ANOVAR (analysis of variance) reports to the Board with complete information on ALL variances over 5% , or over a specific number, for every line item. This was how I was required to run the business - to be accountable for funding AND for results. Nowhere in this budget are there links to that kind of detail which would inform exactly HOW the money will be spend on what specific projects/services and what would result from that spend.

Only when I understand what the 2024 budget accomplished with the money that was spent (and the reasons for over and underspent funds) would I be able to ask smart questions about the 2025/26 budget proposal. Yes, this could be getting WAY into the weeds and more learning/studying than what any ordinary community member (or government employee!) would be willing to do. BUT, with that information in hand and a smart young person running some AI analysis on those numbers using REALLY good queries....you could present charts and graphs and 'predictive' information that could be much more easily understood. AI is your not-so-secret weapon for creating information that truly informs us citizens using context and data in minutes...even seconds. If you have the appetite to be THAT transparent.

It would also be important to see the spend trend lines month by month for this 2024 financial year on your 'key categories' of municipal spend. I'm guessing that the spend in any "underspent" categories (to the end of October) will suddenly accelerate and be "on" or "over" budget by the year end. This is the inevitable practice of all organizations (government and corporate) to 'find a place to spend the money so we don't lose the allocation to that line item for next budget." I have spoken with two government employees who said they have specifically been told to find places to spend the rest of the assigned budget(s) for their area just so the allocation in the subsequent budget isn't reduced.

I'm sure the 2024/25 budget is an aggregation of what every department/project

manager has prepared for their area with an eye to expected cost increases beyond last year's budget (not actual). Good hearted folks wanting to do a good job in their area but NOT being told that they must control of even CUT their spend by x% AND find creative solutions for getting the work done anyway. Yes they will complain mightily and gnash their teeth and struggle...but after that, they might just get down to work and figure it out. I did it for years so I know it's possible - and to still get quality results. So now that big question...what ARE the year to date numbers for this year, and for next year's budget allocations - what are the specific (measureable/observable) , expected results and what happens if they are met? Or not met? And will you report on all of it?

With respect,

Personal Privacy

Victoria BC
Personal Privacy

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Cc: [Marg Gardiner \(Councillor\)](#)
Subject: Well being of citizens paramount ...budget
Date: October 29, 2024 8:24:50 PM

We are in a climate crisis. We need to address this before everything else.

We have unbridled poverty and its results (homelessness, drug use, crime, mental health and physical health problems)...we need to address the ever growing poverty.

Less on frills like the silliness of spending millions on redoing centennial sq (which will NOT revitalize downtown no matter how many studies are done that claim it will)
Spend money to keep the beloved crystal pool in good working order- a referendum is expensive and useless (we have all the expertise in management already at city hall...USE IT..instead of paying outside contractors) ...the average citizen might have an "opinion" ... but we need a well thought out economical plan, not emotional opinions.

Stop increasing the funding for the police and start funding citizen needs for homes, health, jobs. Make victoria a place for the average person, not just the more well-off, stable and secure citizens.

Encourage more food security within our city. It's precarious at the moment with our dependence on imported foods.

Think about dark skies and sound pollution effects on humans and animals.

Encourage community and inter generational living.

Personal Privacy

Sent from my iPad

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Fw: 12% means mismanagement
Date: October 29, 2024 8:17:01 PM

Dear Mayor and Council and Legislative Services,

Another far-above-inflation tax increase is too much burden on the retired people who built this city and deserve to be able to afford to live peacefully in our own homes that took most of us 25 years to pay off.

Inflation for the past year was 3%. Your job is to match that 3%. That means laying people off and ending programs.

Our frustration is compounded by the amount of cash that this same council has handed out to ex-convicts, and special interest groups whose activities are reviled by the taxpayers. One of the first ways to achieve 3% is working to your mandate, rather than spending our money on homeless people and drug addicts and criminals. Leave the province's job to the province.

Please make some tough decisions and get the increase down to 3%.

Thanks a lot for your attention.

Personal Privacy

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Fw: Centennial Square plan
Date: October 30, 2024 8:25:12 AM

Please see the email below which I sent to City Council. Marg Gardiner advised me to send it to you.

Personal Privacy

From: Personal Privacy
Sent: October 28, 2024 7:02 PM
To: mayorandcouncil@victoria.ca <mayorandcouncil@victoria.ca>
Subject: Centennial Square plan

Hello Mayor and Council,

I know you don't really want public input about the plan for Centennial Square but I would like to say one thing. Because of the homelessness problem widespread in downtown Victoria, most parents don't like to bring their young children downtown. There is too much garbage, too many people living in terrible circumstances right out in the open, too much chance of violence, too much mental illness. The parents certainly will not want to bring the children to the splash pool you are planning for Centennial Square.

so if you go ahead anyway and get rid of the existing water pool and build a splash pool, that will be an awful lot of public money absolutely wasted. And there are so many other things that need to be done in downtown.

I know you won't listen to me, but i had to write anyway.

Personal Privacy

From: [Personal](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: The 12.6 property tax increase
Date: October 30, 2024 11:15:38 AM

I am have having a hard time trying to understand how you can even consider this increase. I have owned a commercial building in Victoria for over 30 years and last year my buildings assessed value was increased by \$240,000 with no inspection of my building or property. I contested my assessment and B.C. Assessment told me three different stories none of them true and Victoria sent the rates. There are several other buildings in my area equal and larger size that the assessment has gone down. This amounted to a \$5000.00 plus increase in my property tax which amounted to 33.8% of my total income from my building before I pay any other costs. An increase of 12.6 percent will add another \$5000.00 to my taxes. If this increase goes through I sure you will find more business and land owners that will be leaving Victoria. [Personal Privacy](#)

From: Perso
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 13% property tax increase?!!
Date: October 30, 2024 8:36:33 AM

See my message below...

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Personal Privacy**
Date: Fri, Oct 25, 2024, 11:06 AM
Subject: 13% property tax increase?!!
To: Victoria Mayor and Council <mayorandcouncil@victoria.ca>

There's a rumor that you guys are going to be increasing property taxes by 13% in the next year. Let me tell you that as a senior on a fixed income, I can't afford any more property tax increases. The last one was almost 8% for my little house in Oaklands! I couldn't even afford that one.

Seniors can't afford to pay for any more useless bike lanes, so please STOP doing that. I'm tired of seeing all these community plans to remove vehicle lanes to put in bike lanes. The majority of taxpayers don't or can't use them. Your idea of removing lanes along the Hillside Road areas of Oakland is insane. Trucks need to carry goods to the mall and other businesses along that route. Your incessant anti-car plans are driving people out of Victoria. You ruined Clover Point for seniors who used to drive down there and park to watch the sunsets.

Do you want seniors to have to choose between paying more for property taxes or groceries?

If you continue along this path of destruction, I shall be forced to move, which I don't want to do.

It seems that I have no representation or say in anything you people do with MY money. All I can do is BEG you to please stop raising property taxes

Sincerely,

Personal Privacy

Victoria BC

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Municipal Tax Increases
Date: October 30, 2024 11:03:16 AM
Attachments: [Time for a Taxation and Services Limitation to be Imposed on Municipal Governments.pdf](#)

Time for Taxation and Revenue Reform in Municipal Governance

The City of Victoria's consideration of a 12% tax increase is simply unacceptable. Municipal staff should have been directed from the start not to waste time proposing a budget that exceeds the rate of inflation. Unfortunately, this message was either never sent or ignored, leading to what appears to be a wish list drafted more by the CUPE Union than by any consideration for the taxpayers.

There is no evidence that the City has made any serious effort to source additional revenue beyond property taxes, which should be the last resort. Parking fees in downtown Victoria are exorbitant, driving businesses away just as fast as the rise in street crime. Small business owners are now forced to lock their doors and hire security to protect their employees and inventory, further driving up their costs.

What is lacking is imagination and business acumen. The Mayor and Council, along with City staff, seem entirely focused on squeezing more out of property taxes and service fees, rather than thinking creatively about new revenue streams. It's their duty to manage the city in a way that benefits residents, not to pile additional costs onto them.

Landlords are particularly hard-hit. They're restricted to rent increases tied to the cost of living, yet they're expected to absorb tax increases that are two or three times that amount. On top of this, there are skyrocketing service fees from both the City and the Capital Regional District. It's a recipe for disaster—especially in a city where over 60% of residents are renters. At the same time, individual property owners, both residential and commercial, are being pushed out of the market. If this continues, within a decade we'll see most of the housing stock owned by corporations, with everyday citizens becoming more and more economically marginalized.

This trend of increasing taxation without finding alternative revenue streams needs to end. The City must prioritize keeping property taxes down—not just for property owners but for renters as well. At the same time, the City needs to create opportunities that allow renters to transition into homeownership.

Victoria has over 970,000 cruise ship tourists passing through every year. How have we not implemented a simple fee—say \$5 per passenger—that could directly go to City coffers? Just this one initiative could generate nearly \$5 million annually, easing the burden on property taxpayers. Victoria is recognized worldwide as a premier tourist designation, but we do very little to capture any direct municipal revenue for the city, you can't enter a National park in Canada without paying a fee to visit, time to consider that style of revenue for the taxpayers of Victoria. It's these kinds of ideas that should be at the forefront of Council's thinking.

Ultimately, the Mayor and Council were elected to represent the residents of Victoria, not to enrich CUPE or burden the taxpayers with unsustainable policies. They need to develop new revenue sources that don't raise property taxes, protect local businesses, and keep the city affordable for both homeowners and renters.

The City's future depends on its leaders putting on their thinking caps and coming up with real solutions. Continuing down the current path will only lead to more corporate ownership, higher living costs, and a community that is less diverse and economically stable.

Personal Privacy Victoria BC Personal Privacy

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Personal Privacy Victoria BC

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Draft budget feedback
Date: October 30, 2024 9:50:31 AM

Hello,

Thank you for the opportunity for Victoria taxpayers to provide feedback on the proposed budget for 2025. As background, my husband and I are in our [Personal Privacy](#) have two small children, and own a home in Victoria where last year's property taxes were already \$5,800.00 for the year. I am not against taxation and understand it's importance. However I am concerned with the proposed 12% or more increase, especially with the upcoming Crystal Pool project which would add another \$200 a year to our tax bill. I may be looking at almost \$1,000.00 per year more taxes coming up which is out of control given the cost of living today.

Reviewing the proposed budget, I see millions of dollars being proposed to be spent on "revitalizing Centennial Square" - in my mind this is completely frivolous and unnecessary spending given the current state of disorder and crime downtown. Scrap this idea completely and how much would that save the tax payer per year? Is a splash park really needed downtown where very few children even live? How about put one in a playground that ACTUALLY gets used? Council needs to scrap the frivolous spending and allocate funds to issues that really matter.

Thank you for your consideration,
[Personal Privacy](#)

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Victoria Budget Feedback
Date: November 2, 2024 4:29:33 PM

Greetings,

I'm a taxpaying homeowner and senior in Victoria and, having extensively reviewed the materials attached to the October 24 COTW, I want to congratulate Council and Staff on the fact-based Financial Plan & Budget that you've drafted. I am in general support of the Plan and Budget, and I have some specific points I want to share with you.

Public Engagement Methodology

I really appreciate that you are not just relying on letters and meeting attendance (which allows certain voices to dominate), but have included scientifically valid surveys and in-person engagements with historically under-represented groups in the engagements. I was particularly struck by the IPSOS survey finding that 50% put Housing as their top priority, while only 28% put Public Safety as top priority. That is certainly a different perspective than one might get from traditional or social media!

Staff Presentation to Council on the Financial Plan

This presentation did a great job of explaining the context, rationale, and meaning behind the less obvious aspects of the Financial Plan and Budget. It made clear that this Council is dealing with a long accumulated load of deferred maintenance, new challenges due to climate change, and the unwillingness of past Councils to raise taxes enough to pay for the work that needed to be done.

My key takeaways are.

-

Our capital assets need a lot of work that we know of and, frighteningly, we don't even have accurate assessments to gauge our risk or tell us how much getting to an acceptable state is really going to cost.

-

We've been using Reserves as bandaids to cover the gap

-

Even with the proposed tax increases, the city needs to take on more debt to try and get out of this hole. This will make our debt service costs rather high, even without Crystal Pool.

The proposed tax increase

I'm sure that you'll hear from many people talking about how the proposed tax increase is horrific. I do think that Victoria's Business property taxes are high enough to be hurting our city. But Victoria's residential tax rates are lower than anyplace I've lived. For my household, the 12.77% increase would be less per year than many people pay for a single tank of gas! And before you listen to people saying "but what about seniors on fixed incomes" just remember that seniors are allowed to defer their property taxes.

Don't even bother trying to get the increase down a bit - the people who are upset about increases will still be mad, and you won't collect enough to solve our problems. Honestly, I would support a much larger increase if I thought it was going to be money well spent.

Service Cuts & Operating Efficiencies

It's very tempting, and often politically more expedient, to cut everything a little bit rather than choose winners and losers. But when you don't make those choices, everything just ends up kind of crappy.

If I were you, a key place that I'd look for savings while also addressing the top priority stated in the public engagements, is to make the new OCP and associated Zoning very permissive, and get rid of parking minimums and most of the detailed rules, guidelines, and committees that result in staff and developers going back & forth for months and years on every project. Victoria's most beloved heritage neighborhoods were created without all these rules and reviews! If we suddenly get too much housing built you can tighten up the zoning later. And if some of the buildings are boring or ugly, that can be fixed by planting trees or adding murals.

What I hope Council does with the Financial Plan and Budget

I hope that you lead with courage - implement the full recommended tax increase, take some debt to start digging Victoria out of the infrastructure hole we're in, and make hard and sometimes unpopular choices about services and projects.

Thank you for all you do!

Personal Privacy

Personal Privacy Victoria

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Feedback on 2025-2029 Draft Financial Plan
Date: November 2, 2024 1:22:33 PM

Dear Victoria City Council, Mayor, and City Staff,

I am writing to you with my feedback on the 2025-2029 Draft Financial Plan for the City of Victoria. Below I will discuss several concerns I have regarding the current draft.

1. Victoria Police Department:

It is deeply concerning to me that the largest category in the proposed 2025 operating budget is for the Victoria Police Department. As a racialized person who lives in community with other racialized people, [Personal Privacy](#)

I (and many of those in my community) are frequently made to feel less safe rather than more safe due to the increased presence of police. Even in situations where I have contacted the police on my own accord, I have not felt their actions made me feel safer nor made the situation a safer one.

It is clear that police are currently being asked to hold too many roles without the proper training or intention. Instead of continuing to increase funds going towards the Victoria Police Department, we must divest funds previously dedicated to the VPD and funnel them towards better community care such as Community-Led Crisis Response Teams with trained mental health support workers and better infrastructure and staffing for safe-supply sites.

It should not be a surprise to anyone at the City that crime rates are linked to a myriad of social and economical pressures such as the housing crisis, inflated grocery costs, and lack of access to medical care including mental health supports. While I recognize that these issues require the support of the provincial and federal governments and cannot be solved by the City alone, I ask you to consider the difference you can make as leaders in this community. Reframe your idea of what safety and a thriving community looks like and prioritize funds towards that vision.

2. Bylaw:

Within the proposed budget for Bylaw Services, I understand that a large portion of this category is dedicated to Bylaw Enforcement which includes patrolling parks and taking down illegal shelters (ie. taking down shelters of those who are tenting in the park because they do not have housing). Rather than the budget being allocated to bylaw services to patrol parks and to remove “illegal” sheltering, this money should be funneled into long term housing solutions and anti-poverty measures, such as comprehensive healthcare, food justice supports and more. If budgets intended for patrolling and tearing down sheltering were allocated to relevant services, such as food

justice and housing, this would decrease the need for shelters in parks.

I also want to highlight the gross disservice that is being done to the unhoused members of our community during “bylaw enforcement”. I genuinely want to understand what the City expects our unhoused community members to do when each morning officers disrupt their rest, remove their belongings, and threaten them with arrest or penalties unless they leave. Where are they expected to go?

3. Climate Action

I am genuinely appalled that only a measly 4% of the proposed 2025 operating budget is dedicated to Sustainable Planning. Not only that, but that almost the entire focus of these funds is being put towards vehicles used by City staff.

I admire the plan for more comprehensive waste bins that help remove organics and recycles from ending up in the landfill, but this cannot be all the action that takes place.

We continue to witness devastating weather events and seasonal changes that affect our community. I call on the City to review the proposed budget and keep in mind that swift and drastic climate action is required for the safety of our community.

I urge you to listen to these points made and the needs of the community. We have the opportunity to address inequity in our city and create a thriving community for all who live here.

Sincerely,
[Personal Privacy](#)

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Draft Budget Comments
Date: November 2, 2024 3:40:43 PM

Dear Mayor and Council,

Here are my comments on the 2025 Draft Budget. They are based on reading the *Draft Budget Summary*, the *Draft Budget*, and the *Council Orientation* presentation from the October 24 COTW meeting. My comments are structured as a set of observations, followed by a list of what I would recommend as city priorities, and some comments on specific projects.

I would like to start, however, by expressing my appreciation for the way in which the budget is set out. I've lived in a number of cities over the years, and Victoria's engagement materials are consistently among the clearest and most accessible that I have seen. That said, there are two areas that I think could be clearer:

- The *Council Orientation* presentation did a good job of explaining why capital budget costs are increasing (including the built-in 3% annual increase through 2030). That was one aspect of the budget that I didn't think was well represented in the engagement materials.
- I was able to derive the 12.77% (now 12.17%) property tax increase number, but it wasn't easy! I found it striking that the property tax increase was substantially larger than the budget increase. I believe that many people will think that a 12% property tax increase represents 12% more spending, and I think it would be useful to show how expenditures and taxes are linked.

Observations

- I live in a strata and am on our strata council. I have seen first hand that maintenance costs have been increasing over the last few years, and I have no trouble understanding why the city's costs are going up as well.
- A 12.17% increase in my property taxes would cost my household an additional \$140 a year. This doesn't bother me at all. A typical take-out for me and Personal Privacy from Big Wheel Burger costs about \$30, and four or five takeouts is a small price to pay for continued reliable sewer system, clean water, more safe places to walk and roll, well kept parks, etc.

- At the same time, I'm sure many people will be triggered by seeing an increase of over 10%, and that few of them will actually read the budget materials before blowing off steam. If Victoria's city council feels the need to cut the budget, then those cuts should be principled and follow a well thought out set of priorities. My personal priorities are given below.
- The debt capacity discussion in the council orientation presentation is concerning to me, especially when the Crystal Pool replacement is added in.
- I continue to strongly believe that the Victoria Police Department budget should be separated from the City of Victoria budget. The police budget is set by the Victoria Police Board and the province, not by the city, and it should not be treated like a budget item the city controls. Regardless of one's feelings about police spending, the budget should be separate.

Priorities

As I mentioned earlier, if Council decides to reduce the budget, then it should do so based on a strong set of priorities. I spent thirty years working for **Personal Privacy**, and saw many rounds of budget cutting. There was always a temptation to try across-the-board cuts in search of "efficiency," but that sort of mindless cutting never seemed to work out well. It was much better to target cuts so that the remaining programs were well funded and could operate smoothly.

That said, here are my priorities for the city:

1. Maintain the physical infrastructure of the city.
 - Deferring maintenance dramatically increases downstream costs, and is almost always a false savings.
 - I very much appreciate Council's strong commitment to maintaining our aging infrastructure and staying on top of maintenance (e.g., underground infrastructure, road resurfacing, etc.).
2. Update infrastructure to reflect new realities. The city's population is growing, and the

climate is changing. If we want to have a vibrant city, then we have to have more people on the street shopping, having fun, etc.. Doing that will require:

- Wider, unobstructed, sidewalks.
- More and better bike & roll lanes.
- Better transit.
- Slower streets.
- Safer street crossings.
- Public washrooms.
- Accessible, family friendly, sidewalks. As we strive to bring more families downtown, we should remember that accessible sidewalks not only benefit people with mobility issues, but also people wheeling a baby carriage.

3.

A growing population needs places to play. To me, that means:

- Prioritizing projects to make the city more pedestrian friendly, creating third spaces, etc.
- Making better use of some of our underutilized spaces, such as Centennial Square.
- Keeping our parks attractive and accessible. This means landscaping, and also adequate numbers of accessible, family friendly, washrooms.

4.

Prioritize Multi-Purpose Flexible Spaces Over Those for Specific Activities

-

If money is tight, I am far more willing to defer spending on new, activity specific, facilities than I am on general maintenance and landscaping. Kids and adults are good at finding ways to play.

- Programs that activate existing spaces are often more important than investments in fancy new spaces, and are easier to alter as circumstances change.

5. Prioritize Process Improvements

- Because we are in the midst of a historic housing shortage, and because our population is growing, one of the most important tasks of the city is approving development applications. The city is responding by, among other things, revamping the OCP and revamping zoning to be in alignment with the new OCP.
- This is a huge opportunity to simplify processes and get rid of some of the guidelines and regulations that add huge costs, not just to housing projects, but also to the city.
- For example, the city’s family housing program guidelines require a certain percentage of two and three bedroom apartments in new projects, and also recognizes that those requirements are not always feasible. This has the unfortunate consequence of requiring time-consuming negotiations between developers and city staff. That costs both the city and the developers time and money. If, instead, the city provided incentives for two and three bedroom apartments, such as density bonuses or exempting some or all of the bedrooms from FAR, the city could achieve it’s family housing goals without

Specific Projects

The following projects are listed in the *Highlights* section of the *2025 Draft Budget Summary*.

Project	Comments
Truth and Reconciliation	Worthwhile and not much money.
Community Safety and	

Wellbeing	
Victoria Police Budget	Largely outside of the city's control.
Fire Services & Bylaw Services	Necessary services. Fire services should prioritize smaller, highly capable, vehicles that are suitable for our older, narrow, streets. These vehicles are popular in Europe and Asia.
OUR DWTN	This is a great program.
Underground Infrastructure	Needs to be done.
Roads and Multi-Modal Improvements	
Road restoration & rehabilitation	Needs to be done. I've read about how the city prioritizes road resurfacing projects, and it all makes sense to me.
Multi-modal corridor improvements	This is a high priority for me. It's part of adapting the city to the changing reality of a growing population. If the city wants to be family friendly, it needs to recognize that children, seniors, people with disabilities, and many others, can't, don't, or shouldn't drive. Furthermore, we need to make it attractive for most people to get around without a car, so that those people and services that need to use motor vehicles can do so effectively. The alternative is crippling congestion.
Traffic calming	Another high priority for me, other seniors I know, and all of my friends with young children.
Accessible sidewalks	It's tough to roll a wheelchair or a baby carriage down a sidewalk blocked by poles. If we want to be family friendly, we need the sidewalks to work for people with young children, people with canes, people with poor balance, people with mobility aids, etc..
New crosswalks & upgrades	Part of accessibility.
Remediating under-sidewalk basements downtown	I hope this includes Broad Street between Fort and Broughton. That's a disaster for the businesses there, and a real detriment to the downtown pedestrian experience.
Infrastructure Projects and Upgrades	
Renewing aging park infrastructure	Important role of city government.
Detailed design and	I strongly support this project. The original, 1960s design,

construction of the first phase of the Centennial Square Revitalization	for Centennial Square has never worked well. The proposed design is much better, and I'm hopeful it will make the square a useful part of downtown again. Today, it's really not, and it's in too important a location to ignore.
Regional pickleball hub	I know pickleball has become very popular, but this is a lot of money to spend on a very specific activity, and would be a good candidate to defer.
Crystal Pool Replacement referendum	I think the city has already committed to doing the referendum.
Irving Park and Pemberton Park playgrounds	Family friendly cities are healthy cities.
Royal Athletic Park upgrades	Except for maintenance to minimize future expenditures, I would consider deferring this. Royal Athletic Park is not generally open to the public. I would prefer that we spend money on projects that benefit everyone.
Government Street Refresh	This is a great project, and provides an important public space in the heart of downtown. There are virtually no open areas in downtown for creating new parks, so the best way to support our growing population is to create public, pedestrian friendly, third spaces like Government Street.
Climate Action	
Low carbon fleet	While I don't know the details of what the city plans, I am generally in favour of adopting low-carbon vehicles as our existing vehicles wear out . I also support installing the infrastructure needed to support that transition. I do not support replacing existing, useful, vehicles. I am also not a fan of installing charging stations on city streets.
Waste bins with zero waste stations	Sure, though this would also be a deferrable expense. Depending on how they operate I would need to be convinced that people will actually use them. My own observation is that people throw stuff into the first receptacle they find, regardless of how it's labeled. If we don't get good separation, then I see no point in having multiple bins.
Community Planning	
City wide and area based planning	I often feel that our planning guidelines are overly specific, that it is impossible to regulate good taste, and that many of our guidelines - in their attempt to prevent bad design - end up driving up costs and preventing

	<p>great, innovative designs. I think less might be more.</p> <p>At the same time, I think that making sure we have the recreational, transportation, and infrastructure necessary to support growth is a critical part of what the city offers.</p>
Climate Action	<p>The city needs to respond to the effects of climate change, and should, in its own actions, model climate leadership. At the same time, we should not forget that the single biggest thing the city can do to be environmentally responsible is to make it attractive for more people to live closer to the goods and services they use every day. Encouraging multi-family housing and active transportation is boring, but far more effective than any amount of “gizmo green”. Also, actions to reduce carbon emissions long term (like not using gas in new construction) are way more important than achieving the highest possible energy efficiency rating or installing solar panels.</p>
Heritage	<p>I am often not a fan of heritage designations. Certain buildings deserve preservation, but, too often, heritage designations are used as a tool to prevent multi-family housing in a neighbourhood, and I do not support that at all.</p>

Sincerely,

Personal Privacy

Personal Privacy, Victoria

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Draft Budget - Have your Say
Date: November 4, 2024 10:36:46 AM

2025 Draft Budget - Have your Say:

12.7% increase is unacceptable and a very heavy burden on Victoria residents.

GOAL: Cut the "nice to dos", re-examine overhead costs, and address the core problems in Victoria:

Reductions:

Truth & Reconciliation: Defer/eliminate the \$200,000 budget.

Roads and Multi-Modal: Reduce the \$8.9million budget for multi-modal corridor improvements and defer all bike lane construction by at least one year.

Administration: Reduce city government administration and operating staffing by 10%.

Administration: Reduce all wage reviews to CPI (1.6% in September 2024, 3.9% annualized 2023).

Administration: Mandate all city staff to go back to the office to improve productivity.

Administration: Eliminate/reduce fees to consultants.

Infrastructure: Defer \$2.5million portion to construct a regional pickleball hub.

Infrastructure: Defer by one year the \$600,000 referendum on Crystal Pool.

Infrastructure: increase graffiti removal budget.

Climate Action: Reduce \$4.4million budget by only focusing on the charging infrastructure network.

Community Planning: Reduce \$13.5million budget by a minimum of 10%.

City Grants: Audit \$6.2million City Grant budget and after public consultation reduce by a minimum of 10%.

Improvements:

Community Safety and Wellbeing: Increase police downtown foot patrol budget.

Community Safety and Wellbeing: Increase Bylaw Services Budget and enforcement officers downtown and parks. (establish zero tolerance bylaw enforcement for open drug use, loitering and camping).

Infrastructure: Allocate dollars to paint and clean up City Hall, we should be proud of this heritage building!

REDUCE BUDGET INCREASE TO MAXIMUM 3%.

Thank you,

Personal Privacy

Victoria BC
Personal Privacy

From: Personal Privacy
To: Public Hearings
Subject: 2025 Budget
Date: November 4, 2024 2:59:36 PM

Victoria Council,

As a business owner who is still reeling from a 2024 24% Property Tax increase, it is very disappointing that you are considering an additional 10% increase in 2025.

These percentages equate to real dollars and I don't believe that this fact is truly grasped by the council. Property tax of **Personal Privacy** increased by \$40,000 last year to an annual total of \$178,000. This year's increase will push this close to \$200,000.

Here is some advice that I use personally when budgeting. Break your proposed expenses down into must have and nice to have categories.

Must have - clean streets.
Nice to Have - bike lanes.

Must have - garbage collection
Nice to Have - bike lanes

Must Have - public safety
Nice to have - bike lanes

If you focus on the must haves, you may find that you don't need to increase taxes every year.

Please remember that the role of Council is manage the city. Keep the lights on, the roads clear and garbage picked up. Your job isn't supporting every vocal minority group or pushing an ideological green agenda. In your attempts to make Victoria some model city you are forcing local business out of downtown and failing its average citizens.

Personal Privacy



Personal Privacy

Victoria BC

Personal Privacy

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Draft Budget Summary
Date: November 5, 2024 4:02:33 PM

To Mayor and Council,

I'm writing to you today regarding the draft 2025 budget. While I can appreciate running a city is not an easy task, I was shocked to see a proposed 12.17% tax increase to our city taxes in 2025. I own a house in Fairfield, and my property taxes already went up \$770 in 2024, which was an 11.5% increase from 2023.

How can this city council justify an increase of 23.68% over two years? The national inflation is now below 2%, and this city is proposing increasing taxes by over 12%?

I think what disappoints me most is that I know nothing will change. Council will continue to justify these massive increases while we watch our downtown deteriorate and business pack up and leave. For most of us, we don't mind paying our taxes. They are ultimately what pay for daily services, but being asked to continuously pay more while receiving less and less in return is a hard pill to swallow.

Sincerely,

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Personal Privacy

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Draft budget
Date: November 5, 2024 12:34:58 PM

Dear Council.

While I realize the draft tax increase of 12 per cent is a ruse so taxpayers are relieved when it's "only" eight or 10 percent, any increase over the annual inflation rate is unconscionable.

While there is great wealth in this city, there are many more thousands of people who pay taxes on modest condominiums for whom a tax increase becomes a hardship, as it's added to increases in insurance, food, maintenance and other unavoidable costs. The increase will also affect providers of rental properties, making it uneconomical to provide 'affordable' housing

The city's residential tax base has grown and the assessed values of homes has increased so there's really only one reason for a substantial, above-inflation, increase in property taxes, and that is the inability to manage costs. This is your fundamental responsibility: fulfill it.

Personal Privacy

Victoria

* not 'that' **Personal Privacy** - the other side, where people who haven't seen a 12% increase in their incomes live.

From: [Community](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Feedback on the 2025 Draft Budget
Date: November 8, 2024 9:28:36 AM

Hello,

I work as the Community Development & Services Manager at Oaklands Community Association. I work directly with the public in a community service capacity overseeing the Food Security programs, Community Garden project, the centres EDI initiatives, and other community serving supports and projects.

Please see my comments to the 2025 Draft Budget below:

The proposed 2025 Police budget makes up 23 % of the total City of Victoria Budget for 2025.

- By contrast...
 - Parks, Rec, and Facilities - 9%
 - VicFD - 7%
 - GVPL - 2%
- This means that the proposed total Police Budget is 5% higher than all the above departments combined.

There is a growing field of [research](#) that is looking at how increasing police budgets do not have a direct impact on crime rates in cities. Rather there is [research](#) that suggests that funding community services, community centres, public libraries, and other social sector services can be more impactful at reducing crime rates by creating spaces and programming that support inclusion, connection, and belonging for people.

My Suggestions:

1) As the Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator at Oaklands, I am suggesting **at least doubling the Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator grant from \$223,230 > \$446,460.**

- This community grant is massively impactful for city residents, as it provides us with the capacity to set the groundwork for community members to participate in a meaningful food security project with one another. It provides community members with a space for learning and empowerment, connection and belonging.
- While providing \$10,000K/year per garden is a great start, doubling this amount per garden would increase our capacity as community garden coordinators to support these projects to be even more beautiful and impactful parts of the City.
- Right now we are trying to integrate an equity framework into the Oswald Park Community Garden and it is difficult to do so with such limited coordinating resources and volunteer burnout. Having more funding capacity per community garden to do this work other would support increased access to community gardens and make an even more meaningful impact, and support sustainable garden management.

My suggestion is to reallocate money for this from the proposed police budget.

- This would be a total of 0.33% of the cities proposed share of the police budget.

2) As a social sector and community worker, I am suggesting **increasing both the Parks, Recs and Facilities, and the GVPL departments funding by at least \$1,000,000** each to support community programming.

- See the aforementioned research that links increased funding to community centres, libraries, and other community serving programs to increased community well being and reduced rates of crime.
- This would reallocate a total of 2.9% of the cities proposed share of the police budget.

3) As supporting the Associations EDI initiatives including those around Truth and Reconciliation fall under my portfolio, I also suggest **increasing the proposed Truth and Reconciliation budget from \$200,000 to at least \$1,000,000 in grant funding** for the Songhees Nation and the Xwsepsum Nation.

- Increasing this amount by \$800,000 would be a total of 1.17% of the cities proposed share of police budget.
- Considering the [historical context](#) of the role Policing played in upholding residential schools and anti-Indigenous violence across BC and Canada, this is small % towards signaling a meaningful contribution from the City of Victoria towards your ongoing commitment to Indigenous Reconciliation.

4) Finally, because being able to serve my community and create connections across the city are impossible without quality and accessible public transportation, I am suggesting **increasing the proposed budget for Transit Network Improvements from \$250,000 to at least \$500,000.**

- This amount could go towards research, improvements and maintenance of Victorias public transportation system.
- There is mounting [research](#) that suggests that investing in public transportation:
 - Reduces greenhouse gas emissions, showing a commitment to addressing climate change
 - Reduces the economic costs associated with traffic collisions
 - Benefits community health by reducing respiratory related illnesses, and increasing access to community services.
- This would reallocate 0.37% of the cities proposed share of the police budget.

If the city took only these four recommendations to reallocate the police budget towards public programs and services, the proposed police budget would drop from \$68.3 million to \$65.03 million for 2025.

With that reallocation, the total police budget would still make up 17.8% of the total budget - still the largest percentage of any other department.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my feedback.

Laura Tait (they/them)

Community Development and Services Manager
Oaklands Community Association
#1- 2827 Belmont Ave. Victoria, BC V8R 4B2

Phone: 250-370-9101 ext. #5

The OCA humbly acknowledges the privilege of serving our community on the unceded ancestral territories of the Lək̓ʷəŋən speaking peoples, in particular the Songhees and X̱sepsəm First Nations.

From: [Engagement-External](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Cc: **Personal Privacy** [Engagement-External](#)
Subject: FW: Feedback on the 2025 Draft Budget
Date: November 8, 2024 11:13:50 AM

Testing email to see if legislative services email can receive. Thank you!

From: **Personal Privacy**
Sent: November 8, 2024 10:27 AM
To: legislativeservices@victoria.ca <IMCEAUNDEFINED-
legislativeservices+40victoria+2Eca@namprd11.prod.outlook.com>
Subject: Feedback on the 2025 Draft Budget

Dear Mayor and Council,

I would like that a current balance sheet be included with the draft budget report going forward so that residents have transparency of any long-term liabilities of the Municipality.

Besides that, I encourage you to trim the budget slightly wherever you can. Currently our economy is stagnant and I don't believe it fair to increase taxes on fellow citizens by 12.17%. With the current costs of housing, living, and taxes this leaves individuals and families with less disposable income that can be used to take on new endeavors and revitalize the local economy naturally.

With an aging population and the ability for retired citizens to defer their property taxes until death, I believe too much of this tax burden is being placed on younger generations in order to provide more services to older generations. I know this particular law is out of the Councils control, but I find it unequitable.

Our parks are amazing in this city when compared to just about anywhere else in North America. I implore Council to reduce the \$9,645,000 expenditure for the Parks Redevelopment Program. Another line item that could potentially be reduced is the IT infrastructure. Current advancements in technology and AI have greatly reduced costs for IT in the private sector and I'm hoping efficiencies can be found here and current processes adapted within the City of Victoria.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Personal Privacy
Victoria, BC Personal Privacy

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Cc: [Chris Coleman \(Councillor\)](#)
Subject: 2025 Draft Budget
Date: November 9, 2024 12:59:54 PM

Dear Legislative Services,

I am reaching out to express my concern with the proposed property tax increase for the City of Victoria. It is not serving the public interest.

The federal government has announced that they are cutting staff and many are anticipating that the federal Budget 2025 will demonstrate belt tightening as we lead in to federal election year.

Reduced federal and provincial funding will combine to have a trickle-down effect to municipal budgets across Canada.

At a time when so many are grappling with issues of affordability it would be prudent for the City to act in the public interest, hold the line on costs, and **not** increase property taxes.

It seems inappropriate for the City to spend tax-payer dollars on pickle-ball courts, a new swimming pool (that is not broadly supported) the Victoria a Conference Centre Event Flow-Though and so many other items at this time.

On the corporate side, the Youth Bus pass program and I suspect many other programs - could be discontinued. New capital projects should be paused - including consultation on new capital projects.

Most certainly, no tax payer dollars should be going to support the purchase of facilities, including sites like the proposed safe consumption site on Dolwer Place.

The proposed 369% increase on the corporate budget for contingencies is also surprising.

I urge City Councillors to direct staff to go back to the drawing board, and create a budget that reflects the current financial realities.

This is not the year to increase property taxes, but focus on simply maintaining the infrastructure that the city already has.

Sincerely,
Personal Privacy

Victoria

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Draft Budget
Date: November 11, 2024 9:47:52 PM

To Mayor and Council,

The proposed VicPD budget makes up 23% of the proposed City of Victoria budget for 2025.

I am concerned to see that the proposal is to increase VicPD's budget from last year. The VicPD has long had one of the highest per capita police budgets in Canada. It appears that a higher police budget has not resulted in more public safety.

Time to earnestly defund and redirect funds to programs, initiatives, and city services that may actually address the concerns the VicPD has been unable to address.

Personal Privacy
they/them

November 14, 2024

Dear Mayor, Council, and City Staff,

Re: 2024-2028 Draft Financial Plan

Capital Bike's Victoria Local Committee is pleased to submit our response to the City's draft financial plan for the coming year.

Our committee supports the continued investment in protected bike and roll lanes throughout the community as outlined in the draft plan. When combined with previous investments in improved routes on Blanshard, Gorge, Shelbourne, Caledonia, and Selkirk, this year's planned upgrades are welcome additions to Victoria's growing network and will mean safer routes for people who choose to travel in our city without a personal motor vehicle.

Below, we recommend several additions to enhance safety and improvements in both the existing cycling network and the proposed projects for 2025. We encourage staff and council to adopt these recommendations and ensure that the financial plan provides funding for them.

We are pleased to see this year's multi-modal corridor projects explicitly commit to protected infrastructure, including at the Blanshard and Bay Street intersection, which represents an important improvement needed elsewhere along Victoria's current network. Intersections are among the most hazardous areas on Victoria's roadways, and installing protected infrastructure at these locations can reduce collisions with vulnerable road users.

We encourage staff and council to install more protected intersections in high-incident areas for vehicle accidents, both within the scope of this financial plan and moving forward. Multi-modal corridor improvements in the draft financial plan include intersections that rank among [the top 25 most dangerous](#) in the city, according to ICBC crash data for injuries and fatalities. These intersections include several along Bay Street—at Quadra (5th most dangerous), at Cook (11th), at Douglas (18th), and at Government (23rd). Other high-risk intersections include Cook and Hillside, which ranks 8th, and Tolmie and Douglas, which ranks 12th.

While it is also encouraging to see this year's draft financial plan explicitly outline which corridors will include protected infrastructure, it is critically important that the entirety of these routes prioritize safety for vulnerable road users. For example, several corridors in the draft plan indicate painted lanes will be used, which will leave unprotected gaps with a high risk of injury for people biking and using other modes of active transportation.

We are also encouraged to see the list of multi-modal improvement projects set for design and construction starting in 2026. In addition to these projects, we strongly urge staff and council to

add design work for a protected route along Esquimalt Road to connect the E&N Trail to the Esquimalt municipal boundary and the township's upcoming protected lanes. Esquimalt Council and staff have officially requested this of the City of Victoria, and this short 500-metre stretch of roadway in Vic West should be a priority.

Additional investments in the cycling and pedestrian network, including continued traffic calming initiatives, are positive additions in this year's draft financial plan, especially those prioritizing safety near Victoria's school zones. Diversionary traffic calming measures, such as school streets, pocket parks, and plazas, should be prioritized to reduce traffic on bike and roll routes and create or expand low-traffic neighborhoods. Significant investment in low-traffic neighborhoods will be required to meet the Go Victoria and CleanBC vehicle kilometer traveled reduction targets.

We also recommend that the 2025 budget provide resources to improve cycling travel times on high-volume AAA routes through adjustments to intersection control and signaling to favor bike traffic by reducing stops and wait times. Additionally, future investments in traffic signaling should be compatible with these goals.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the current financial plan. Overall, we are encouraged by the improvements and progress being made to build a safer, better-integrated bike and roll network that complements other transit and active transportation improvements across the city.

Sincerely,

Patrick Schreck, Victoria Local Committee Chair, Capital Bike
Doug Baer, Advocacy Chair, Capital Bike

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Draft Budget
Date: November 14, 2024 8:20:45 PM

As a landlord for a retail store in the downtown, with the tenant ^{Personal Privacy}, some restraint on the City's budget would help. I don't see that happening in this budget!

Given the general drug disorder and mess and the high taxes, increased costs, too much parking fees, I do not see us finding a tenant, and given the complete indifference of the majority of the city council, the space will be empty for a long time given the state of downtown. So if the opportunity arises we will be selling. When we purchased the property we did not foresee the complete disregard for small retail business and property owners. All very disheartening.

I don't think those who make decisions at the city realize the number of small retail businesses downtown that would leave if they could. We are also tenants downtown and operate a small business. This week a junky broke our keypad back door lock during regular business hours went into the washroom locked themselves in there and ripped off the paper towel dispenser off the wall. \$1,700 for a new keypad back door lock. Not the first time its happened!

Given how high commercial taxes are some restraint would help.

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Budget 2025 Centennial Square enhancements
Date: November 15, 2024 4:03:14 PM

\$7 million for the detailed design and construction of the first phase of the Centennial Square Revitalization Project. Phase 1 will include the construction of a large central plaza with a new performance area, lighting and an interactive water feature, new trees and landscaping, with the monolith public art restored and moved closer to Douglas Street.

Events to date work well and are well attended enough that don't need an expenditure of this magnitude at this time of financial hardship.

We need to save money at this point, not spend more for feel good projects. Spend this money when we have it, not increase taxes to pay. There are definitely more important areas that need additional work. Safety and accessibility of the downtown by the general public and tourists.

Sell downtown motels and use that money to improve the square if you like. Motels have become breeding grounds for addiction and disruption of downtown businesses. Use these motels as facilities for real treatment, involuntary treatment and closed units so drug dealers and users do not have to disrupt the downtown to pay for their mental illnesses.

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email; Marianne Alto \(Mayor\)](#)
Subject: City budget
Date: November 15, 2024 1:17:42 PM

First off you need to work within the tax dollars collected and no bump in the police as you finally are in the process of cleaning up Pandora the money you have wasted should be there already .I think head manager of the city and the manager for finance's should both be replaced . The city manager and finance manager has not to knowledge put any money for the new Pool or have I heard of any provincial or Federal grant nor should taxpayers should not pay a dime out of our pockets . You can't trust anyone employed by the CITY OF VICTORIA if you tell me 360.00 per year added to my already high property taxes 4700.00 per year . The 360 will also be subject to the sitting and future mayor and councilors raising the amount to 12% or more every year for the next 20 years I figure will cost me 5643.00 by the end of 20 years . Not sure if it was the Mayor or City manager who wrote the contract with the BC LIONS to come to VICTORIA and did not get the figures in writing a big defferents in cost and a final bill is out rages on behalf of taxpayers and not only that it proves you can't be trusted with OUR money. The spending done by the city to by HERMAN'S and 1720 Blanchard was also out rages 14.5 million ,buying a whipple ball court at 100,000 and fake ice at 1000.00 and not used is also not right .2 million to give drug dealer so called chairity 2 million and suspending a fire fighter which cost more than a days pay for taxpayers .Paying cab drivers and not sending the municapitly of SAANICH a bill is wrong and who ever paid the taxi company should also be fired . Most of the homeless in Victoria came from other cities and provinces as per the 40 Mayor Kennedy sent from Vancouver and not sent back as well as the people who came on CANADA wide warrants . And to solve my request for RESIDENTIAL signs on ,Ave and deciding to spend 1 million and take away our parking is crap.

Personal Privacy

Victoria B.C
Personal Privacy

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Draft Budget Feedback
Date: November 15, 2024 6:26:31 PM

Hello,

I cannot help but notice that the Victoria Police is the single most expensive item in your 2025 budget - **larger even than ALL engineering and public works combined**, by a healthy 5 million.

This is completely absurd. The main activity of the Police is bullying homeless people and abusing natives.

Less for police, more for the library and people & culture.

Regards,

Personal Privacy

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: New Budget
Date: November 15, 2024 11:11:45 AM

I live in Rockland. I am nearly ^{Perso}. I have no suggestions for new spending. I do have a very strong feeling of dissatisfaction with the way council has approved of the ridiculous spending on cement curb barriers for bike lanes, and, along with many friends, suspect that someone on council must have a nephew who owns a cement company! I actually watched in horror as a young teenager lost her balance on Fort Street, wobbled into the curb up the road in front of my car, but managed to recover. The barriers are unnecessary and a danger. Very bad decision; waste of money.

Along the same "roads" theme, and, perhaps not a budget item, is the horrible policy of digging up major roads during the entire tourist season. Years ago, when i phoned to suggest that Victoria expand the number of months for roadwork as a courtesy to our many visitors, i was told that "we cant pour cement in cold weather".

I raised my children in **Personal Privacy**, also a tourist town. I suggested that the young man call ^{Personal Privacy} to get the recipe. Although located in the snow belt, construction season was much longer, and rarely did roadwork attack several areas at a time. They started a job, worked on it, completed it and went to the next. Everyone in my neighborhood with whom I have discussed this issue agrees. It is almost as if the decision-makers WANT to use abusive power by disrupting many areas at a time.

Victoria has many retired residents. We no longer ride bikes. No matter how passionately certain derision-makers want the city to concentrate on encouraging folks to give up cars, it wont happen for us. What a draconian, unnecessary decision and expense city council has made.

Please focus our spending on necessary things, helpful for as many Victorians as possible. We simply don't want, and can't afford projects which are not vital for the safety and comfort of our citizens. **Personal Privacy**

VSent from my iPad

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Proposed Budget Initiatives
Date: November 15, 2024 12:44:10 PM

Dear Mayor and Council:

I have just read your “Have You Heard?” email concerning some initiatives Council is considering in the coming year.

Budgets are all about money; where it is coming from and where it is going. Despite inflation being under some sort of control, spending by Council this year is increasing in excess of 12%, with a projected increase of more than 50% in the next 3 years.

I think it is important for Council to keep in mind, that their stated goal of providing “affordable” housing is entirely inconsistent with their spending patterns. You cannot expect to saddle building owners with these kinds of cost increases and expect them to lower rents. Similarly with home purchases. Are you, Mayor and Council, aware of the connection between your spending and the un-affordability of housing?

The initiatives outlined in your Newsletter are all quite admirable, with one exception.

Fix or replace Crystal pool, but do not make it a multi-use recreation centre. That’s what the YMCA is for. Just build a good pool.

It may be noted that re-useable cups these days are all paper, which is a recyclable item. Styrofoam is not, and kudos for getting rid of them. However, I suspect that the widespread use of steel or plastic cups is more environmentally damaging than paper. Stick to allowing paper cups.

As for the Ten-year plan, Mayor and Council need to more strenuously lobby (complain?) the Provincial Government to remove the indigent folk from our streets. They know what needs to be done; they just won’t do it. If need be, embarrass them into getting it done. If you do not do this, you will not have to worry about overcrowding in Victoria. No one will want to live here.

Busking adds a great flavour to the summer city. Keep it up.

I don’t use them, but I think the Bike Valet program is a good one. It costs little, and serves many.

The street upgrades are mostly a waste of money, chasing a few advantages while inconveniencing the many. Slip lanes are a very good thing; why remove them? Pedestrian safety? Cyclist safety? Teach people how to walk and ride and you won’t have a problem. In short, if you can’t ride in traffic, either don’t go there or learn how. It isn’t rocket science. And, those silly speed humps are inconsistent with even the lowered speed limits. Your trunk contents crash up and down over every one, unless you are going 15 kph. If you want people to go 15 kph, then lower the limit to 15 kph. Don’t say you can go 30 or 40, and then make the driver screech to a slow speed to proceed across the humps. Very annoying.

Community safety? Stop giving money to the Songhees and Esquimalt bands and the SOLID crew, and give it to the cops. We need more blue boots on the ground, not the other.

A response would be appreciated.

Sincerely,
Personal Privacy

From: Pers
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Feedback for draft budget
Date: November 15, 2024 4:45:11 PM

Hi,

I am sending along my feedback for the draft budget:

Please limit raising taxes. If necessary, find areas to cut back on spending. Many people don't have a lot of extra to spare and a double digit property tax increase yearly shouldn't be the norm. If there are areas that need to be tightened in the city's spending, find them as people can't afford super high tax increases. For example, reduce the police's PR budget. I recommend the city limit a tax increase to no more than 5%. Mortgages are super expensive and the last thing people need is a higher bill to pay.

Thank you.

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Have your say on the 2025 Draft Budget
Date: November 15, 2024 12:33:06 PM

I have reviewed the draft budget and the only comment I'd like to make pertains to grants to community service agencies. I understand the City of Victoria has been providing funding to the Alliance to End Homelessness in the Capital Region also known as the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness since its inception in 2008. As this organization does not provide services, has not engaged the broader Victoria community in its advocacy by way of out reach, education and involvement, has not even engaged with the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness at UVic, and as is evident the homelessness situation has worsened since the Coalition's inception, I recommend the funding be re-directed to the Together Against Poverty Society who provides valuable services and advocacy for those of our city who are living in poverty and are in need of its support.

Thank you for this opportunity.

Sincerely,
[Personal Privacy](#)

Sent with [Proton Mail](#) secure email.

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Feedback on the 2025-2029 Draft Financial Plan
Date: November 15, 2024 3:23:16 PM

Please increase the transportation expenditures budget line item and give free bus passes to seniors and reduced rate bus passes to the rest of us. We NEED to get out of our cars, and some of us cannot ride a bike - but we can use public transport if you make it affordable.

Thank you,
Personal Privacy

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Comment on draft budget
Date: November 15, 2024 5:28:17 PM

Council should not have a tax increase for 2025 more than inflation+2%
-in the long run, need to have tax increases approximate = rate of inflation. The majority of people have income increases roughly corresponding to the rate of inflation.

Separate all items into need- to- have (e.g. infrastructure, road & sidewalk maintenance, sewer and water pipes), highly desirable (e.g. park maintenance, libraries, economy generators (e.g. tourist facilities)), public transit), and nice-to-have (everything else)

Housing is a provincial responsibility, not civic. Not everyone has the right to live in City of Victoria - I had to save up to do that! Land, which is the main portion of housing, is much cheaper in rural areas - more homeless people can be given places there for the same outlay. Indigenous support is clearly a federal responsibility.

[Personal Privacy](#) Victoria West

From: [Claire Remington](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Draft Budget - Feedback
Date: November 15, 2024 9:57:54 AM

Hi there,

This email contains my feedback on the 2025 draft budget.

- **Tax Increase:** I support the 12.17% tax increase. I suggest increasing the tax rate of vacant and underused housing. I also suggest restructuring the tax rate to be calculated from "occupant load" of the dwelling (i.e. in terms of m2 of net floor per occupant) to incentivize higher density living.
- **Victoria Police Budget:** There has been ample [research and advocacy](#) arguing for the reallocation of policing budgets towards other government and community-based structures. I suggest reducing the Victoria Police Budget and reallocating funds to Climate Action and Community Funding.
- **OUR DWTN Revitalization Project:** Jane Jacobs, one of the most important urban thinkers of our day, showed us that a city is more than its structures. A city is made vital through the everyday activities and life of residents. The OUR DWTN Revitalization Project, and in particular the Centennial Square Revitalization Project, represents a type of misguided urban renewal that misdirects funds away from people and towards spaces. I suggest eliminating the Centennial Square Revitalization Project, reducing the OUR DWTN Revitalization Project, and reallocating funds to Climate Action and Community Funding.
- **Government Street Refresh Project:** This project represents a significant investment in amenities for tourists rather than for residents. Instead of investing in tourism first, it is more impactful to invest in the residents who create happy and healthy communities that attract tourists based on unique and local qualities. I suggested reallocating the funding from the Government Street Refresh Project to Climate Action and Funding.
- **Community Planning:** I suggest increasing the budget for Community Planning, even if it entails increasing the proposed tax rate, with the exception of heritage buildings. Heritage buildings are challenging to retrofit appropriately, which has implications for greenhouse gas emissions and expense of redevelopment. I suggest reducing the budget for heritage conservation and reallocating funds to other Community Planning activities.

Thank you for your attention,

Claire Remington
She/Her
Executive Director
Compost Education Centre

Tel: 250-386-9676

1216 North Park St.

Victoria, BC V8T 1C9

Office Hours: Wednesday to Saturday, 10am - 4pm

Web: www.compost.bc.ca

Respectfully living and working on unceded and occupied Coast Salish territories, specifically, the ancestral lands of the Lkwungen speaking peoples, the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations; the lands of the SENĆOŦEN speaking peoples, the Tseycum, Paquachin, Tsartlip and Tsawout First Nations; as well as the T'Souke and Scia'new First Nations.

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Draft Budget
Date: November 15, 2024 3:06:52 PM

I am not going to support a 12%+ property tax increase to fund a poorly thought out budget that consists of an incoherent mishmash of operational overspending and vanity infrastructure projects slapped together by a group of New Democrats who are entirely out of touch with their constituents.

I used to get frustrated when I thought of the fools installed to office by the Victoria Labour Council, and helped along by our ever well meaning, but entirely ineffectual, absentee Mayor. Can collective stupidity be "facilitated"? Yes, it can!

I was frustrated by massive salary increases for Council. I was frustrated by gridlock, and an ever expanding web of bike lanes. I was frustrated by crumbling infrastructure as plans are laid to waste millions on redoing "Junkie Square" (adjacent to City Hall). I was frustrated by policies which enable encampments in our parks, and plans to build a new "Junkie Park" to host more addicts downtown.

But now, I just laugh.

Kamala Harris tried this, and voters gave their answer.

David Eby tried this, and voters gave their answer.

Justin Trudeau is still peddling this approach, claiming the support of a "silent majority", and in 2025 voters will give him their answer.

And, in 2026, voters in Victoria will give the Mayor and Victoria City Council our answer.

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Budget
Date: November 15, 2024 12:48:54 PM

1. 17% is ridiculous. You'll be squeezing people out of their homes.
2. Traffic calming measures so far implemented have interfered with public transit. Buses can no longer turn corners without mounting the kerb and cannot stop parallel to the sidewalk so that passengers exiting through the rear door can step down onto the sidewalk. Numerous examples of both cases will be familiar to frequent riders.

Personal Privacy

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

November 16, 2024

Mayor Alto and Victoria City Council
1 Centennial Square
Victoria, B.C. V8W 1P6

Re: City of Victoria budget and proposed property tax increase

Dear Mayor and council,

On behalf of the more than 600 small businesses the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) represents in the City of Victoria, we are writing to express our concerns regarding the 12.17% property tax hike projected in the 2025 Draft Budget, which would be the largest increase for the city in over a decade.

We recognize that municipalities like Victoria often face the challenge of filling critical service gaps and financing essential services downloaded from other levels of government. However, this significant tax increase comes at a time when both residents and business owners are grappling with rising costs. Property taxes are particularly burdensome for small businesses, as they must be paid regardless of the business's revenue.

In Victoria, commercial properties account for nearly half of the city's property tax revenue (44%, or approximately \$81 million), despite representing just 18% of the city's total assessed property value. This results in a fairness ratio of 2.44, ranking Victoria as the fourth most inequitable property tax system for small businesses among British Columbia's 20 largest municipalities.

This imbalance results in small businesses paying a property tax rate 3.7 times higher than that of residents. This disproportionate tax burden places undue financial pressure on Victoria's small businesses, forcing many to make difficult choices. According to recent CFIB survey data, in response to rising property taxes, 66% of BC small businesses have had to raise prices, and 44% have limited business expansion. In times of inflationary pressures, stagnant productivity, and dwindling business investment, the last thing small businesses in Victoria need is another exorbitant property tax hike.

Despite their imbalanced contributions and sacrifices, small businesses across the province feel left behind. A striking 70% of BC small business owners say they do not receive fair value for the city services they pay for, particularly when compared to residents. This unfairness highlights the growing frustration among small businesses, who see their substantial contributions as sacrifices that fail to translate into adequate support or services from local governments.

To address this imbalance, we urge the City of Victoria reconsider the proposed tax increase of 12.17% and adopt a more balanced approach to property tax distribution by conducting a tax shift. When small businesses succeed, they contribute to local employment, consumer spending, and property values, all of which enhance the city's revenue potential and capacity to address rising costs without overburdening residents.

CFIB appreciates your attention to this important issue. If you wish to discuss it further, please do not hesitate to contact us directly at emily.boston@cfib.ca.

Sincerely,



Jairo Yunis
Director for BC and Western Economic Policy



Emily Boston
BC Senior Policy Analyst

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: budget and property tax
Date: November 16, 2024 2:01:51 AM

The concern of young people is that home ownership is too expensive. A large part of the problem is taxation. Income tax, GST and HST take too much of our incomes. Taxation destroys our disposable income and ability to save. It is cheaper to rent, partly because the landlord pays the property tax. Unless municipalities are more frugal about their expenditures, they require more property tax which precludes young people from buying homes. It is too easy to spend other peoples' money.

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Comments on draft budget
Date: November 16, 2024 6:07:47 PM

Council,

I recently got an email mentioning the opportunity to comment on the 2025 Draft Budget. I have two comments I would like to make.

Re: Bloated Police Budget

It is frankly insane that the Victoria Police Department is going to take almost a quarter of our city's budget. This city's police (when not bungling high-profile investigations) routinely talk about how they can't crack down on criminals or respond to crimes. If what the police say is true, why are we paying them?

I remember when a woman threatened to harm herself in my neighbourhood with what I believe ended up being a butter knife. Dozens and dozens of cops stood around for hours, getting paid ludicrous amounts of overtime while showing off their collection of shiny new toys.

This is a clear sign that urgently-needed resources are being squandered by this department and would better be used elsewhere. I urge council to reduce the size of the Victoria Police Department budget by at least 70 percent and spend the money on literally anything else.

Re: Arts Venues

This has been a terrible year for Victoria's underground arts scene, ameliorated only by the City's purchase of Hermann's Jazz Club. Underground venues like Quadratic Sound, Club Loading, and the Victoria Event Centre are vital for cultivating a rich arts scene in a city. There needs to be space for young, messy artists to develop their craft. It has become clear that this is incompatible with the difficult business realities of late capitalism. I urge council to not only directly provide venue spaces for underground cultural activity, but to fund a dedicated city liaison to work with collectives like Quadratic Sound to get around red tape and cultivate a strong Victoria music and arts scene.

Thank you for your time,

[Personal Privacy](#)

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Budget Feedback
Date: November 16, 2024 9:58:26 AM

Dear council: I share a deep concern about the proposed 12.17% property tax increase necessary to support this budget. I am a pensioner, and the prospect of such an exorbitant property tax increase isn't just stressful, but will literally impact my ability to feed myself, and pay for other necessary expenditures like hydro. This kind of increase, once extrapolated, means that property taxes will double in about (7) years. This simply isn't sustainable, nor humane.

I trust that many of the ideas sited in the budget are good ideas, but implore you to realize that the pace of implementation, and hence the accelerated and high increases in property taxes to fund them, needs to be amortized over a longer period of time. In other words, we need not do all of these things in one budget cycle, but rather need to move some of these projects downstream.

I appreciate the ambition of council, but request that we begin to reduce expenditures where possible and continue to do this for the next five years. We can re-examine possibilities once budget expenditures are contained in a way that produces reasonable property tax increases (3-5%/year), not double digit increases.

Thank you for the hard work you do, and for considering the foregoing in your deliberations,

Personal Privacy

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: budget and property tax
Date: November 16, 2024 2:01:51 AM

The concern of young people is that home ownership is too expensive. A large part of the problem is taxation. Income tax, GST and HST take too much of our incomes. Taxation destroys our disposable income and ability to save. It is cheaper to rent, partly because the landlord pays the property tax. Unless municipalities are more frugal about their expenditures, they require more property tax which precludes young people from buying homes. It is too easy to spend other peoples' money.

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Draft Budget
Date: November 16, 2024 10:59:25 PM

To the city council,

Let me be absolutely clear and short. I vehemently oppose the proposed tax increase.

This is the worst council I have ever seen in my 25 years living in Victoria. I propose that we move away from electing the mayor and the council and rather hire qualified people to run this city without personal agendas.

God knows how we need more bike lanes than managing a budget.

Enough is enough. What this council is doing is punishing good tax payers so they can carry out their bleeding heart agenda and bike lanes.

If you can't find a way to manage with the current 7% tax rate just quit your jobs and call for new elections.

It bothers me so much how little thought has been given coming up with this number. Have you given any thought as to how much a household of two workings adults make? Do you have any idea how much groceries, gas , hydro, water, storm water etc cost.

How dare you!!

I hope the council respects the views of its residents and scrap this ridiculous proposal and keep the tax rate as it is.

Thank you.
Personal Privacy

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Draft Budget
Date: November 17, 2024 9:10:07 AM

Hello,

I would like to provide feedback on the 2025 draft budget. It all looks quite reasonable and well thought out to me, other than the 12.2% proposed increase in taxes. At a time of high inflation still impacting people and when most people's wages increase at 2-4% per year, increasing taxes by 12.2% will increase inflation and costs for regular people. Is there not a way to increase the city budget by 2-4% instead of 12.2% ?

Thanks for your consideration.

Personal Priva

From: [Poke Fresh](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Budget Recommendations
Date: November 17, 2024 2:52:58 PM

Hey City of Victoria,

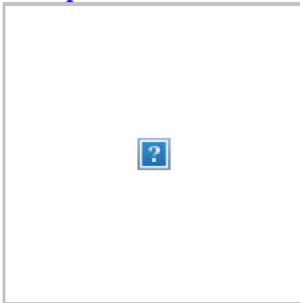
1) Train/Subway - I know it's no easy feat but i would love to see the city dedicate some funds to an eventual train/subway to be built. As our population continues to grow and productivity continues to lessen I believe this would be able to pay off its initial investment relatively quickly and help take away congestion from the city traffic. Which seems to be an ongoing issue.

2) Things to do - I believe victoria needs interactive activities in it's city. Visitors are often told to "see" attractions rather than be active within them. Anytime people come and google what to do, the attractions of Victoria focus on "seeing fishermans wharf" "seeing legislative building" "seeing Craigdaroch castle" etc. This might be more of a private sector thing but if we can encourage things to do aside from eating that would make our city more worth coming too.

Cheers,

--

Aviv Guy
Founder/Owner
Poke Fresh Inc.
T: (778) 922 - 4773
www.pokefresh.ca



From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Draft Budget 2025 Feedback
Date: November 17, 2024 12:42:20 PM

Hello,

Thank you for the opportunity to review and provide feedback on the draft budget. I am a retired, over 60, Victoria native. I love my hometown and wouldn't live anywhere else.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Firstly, I want to thank Council for Victoria's cycling infrastructure. **Personal Privacy**

However, I noticed that there was no specific mention of cycling infrastructure in the budget—did I miss it or is this completely finished?" No tweaks or improvements needed either?

VPD

I did not see anything specific on their operating budget. Are they getting what they asked for? I strongly believe they need more officers. Please give them exactly what they have requested. Has VPD been working with the Province regarding more officer support for social workers—I believe the Province should be hiring enough social workers to provide personal assistance to those who need it in the homeless community, as well as support for those with mental health and addictions. Those social workers will need officer support in many instances.

REHAB, MENTAL HEALTH and SOBER HOUSING

I don't know whether there was a lack of specifics in the survey questions on this because it does not appear to be a high priority. The situation is just getting worse and these people need help. Both temporary and permanent solutions are required. Is the City contributing any funds to this? I didn't see specifics in the budget. I'm conflicted on the City taxpayer providing funding as I believe this should be at the Provincial and Federal levels. I have spoken to both Laurel Collin's and Grace Lore about this and it is definitely on their radars. Please work with them to expedite this serious need in our community.

BYLAW

Are there enough bylaw officers to manage the homeless camping? There should be no comparing on public property. If people want to camp, they should do so in a campground, or there should be outdoor areas available at the existing (or new) shelter facilities for the homeless.

PARKS

Please include funding to put the car access in Clover Point back the way it was. I hear that there is still a lot of anger towards Council for this decision. The current parking is inadequate and is on the wrong side for watching the sunset and kite boarders. I've stopped driving down there because I could rarely get a parking spot. It used to be my go to when I needed some alone/ocean time. In the early summer I heard there were whales passing so I altered my route and drove down there only to not find a spot and briefly stop in the small turn around before other cars came up behind me. It was so disappointing. I do suggest adding a paved sidewalk on the outside of the parking circle for pedestrian safety. Also, there are far too many unused picnic tables and it's usually too windy so people eat their fast food in their cars (like we always have).

Put picnic tables in our parks, like Irving Park which I see is budgeted for a playground upgrade.

The expanded green space with picnic tables between the Havn and the Flying Otter is too big, and in a poor location for views of the harbour. Sitting next to a parking lot is not my idea of waterfront ambience. Plus we do not need to lose any more parking spots.

Is there a focus committee that includes the public on these types of plans? These changes should have public input prior to implementation. Input from Victoria natives and long time residents should be sought.

The upper road/walkway from Pendray at Belleville towards the Laurel Point needs lighting.

What happened to the plans for Laurel Point and Ship's Point? Please be aware that there are live aboards at the Causeway and Ship's Point docks who need to keep the parking (and who do need a loading zone) to remain next to the lit up CANADA sign (which people love by the way—there are always tourists taking pictures!)

Please do not remove the big tree in Centennial Square unless it is dying and is a safety hazard.

STAFF SALARIES

Personal Privacy

I became aware of the significant difference in salaries for IT staff between the City and the Province. There needs to be a review and reduction of City staff salaries.

CITY MANAGER

The budget for the City Manager appears to be extremely high.

PROPERTY TAX INCREASE

Lastly, the proposed property tax increase of 12.7% is much too high.

Thank you for your consideration of my input. If you wish to contact me with questions or further feedback, I've included my phone number.

Personal Privacy

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Comments on the 2025 Draft Financial Plan
Date: November 17, 2024 11:50:16 PM

Hello,

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed Draft Financial Plan, as a resident of Vic West.

Going through the budget document, I'd like to comment on the following items:

1. Neighbourhoods - what is the reason for cutting the funding for this team by half? I believe they do good work and wish they had greater support.
2. I appreciate the extra support to maintain public art.
3. Are there opportunities to increase revenue through by-law services? It appears to be an area of opportunity for greater revenue.
4. Are there opportunities to increase revenue for transportation, in particular? Where do grants show up. I would appreciate the City identifying more grant opportunities to support the work it does to improve our transportation network and make it safer.
5. Why does street operations appear in public works and not transportation? What do street operations entail? Please make this clearer in the next budget documents.
6. With the NDP winning the election, I would anticipate the budget for the Local Government Climate Action Program will remain. I hope this will be reflected in the updated version of the budget.
7. I understand that My Great Neighbourhood Grants is only increasing 2%. My understanding is that the budget for this program is fully subscribed annually, and I believe greater support for this program would be helpful to make Victoria a better place to live.

In the Transportation section, I would like to make the following requests:

1. For Local Street Rehabilitation, I note that the City attempts to coordinate rehabilitation with bicycle/pedestrian/transit network implementation and traffic signal upgrades to minimize public disruption and reduce overall costs to the City. I appreciate this and encourage the continued improvement of the quality of the walking and cycling infrastructure on these streets (e.g., improved sidewalks, new curb bump outs and/or raised intersections, and enhanced cycling opportunities). Local street rehabilitation locations should be identified where improvements to the cycling network and intersections can occur simultaneously, to reduce the demand on those very small budgets.
2. I would also like to see an increase to the budget for cycling network improvements and crosswalk installation and upgrades.
3. The GoVictoria newsletter has noted that there will be more leading pedestrian intervals through the City. I appreciate this. I would also request a significant reduction in the number of "beg buttons" at major intersections (e.g., Hillside and Shelbourne) so that pedestrians will have the priority to cross at all green lights.
4. As a part of Traffic Signal Modernization, at the intersection of Belleville and

Government, please add a left turn signal for busses turning left from westbound Belleville to Southbound Government.

5. Please work with BC Transit to increase bus signal priority to reduce bus travel time. This would be particularly helpful at the intersection of Wharf and Fort.
6. Instead of new traffic signals, I would encourage the City to improve the existing traffic signals so that travel by bicycle can be made more seamless. Enhancing signals towards traffic-dependant intervals, aligned with global best practices (see this [video on traffic lights in Amsterdam](#)) would provide far smoother mobility for all users. I would also encourage more mid-intersection islands for pedestrians (especially at Blanshard and Caledonia) to provide a place to wait in case people cannot cross in one cycle, which is often the case at the end of events at Save-on-Foods Memorial Centre.

7. Personal Privacy

He is very aware of poor junctions and sidewalks. Please enhance the sidewalk rehabilitation program to smooth out sidewalks.

8. I would like to note as an example of a sidewalk/road interface that should set the template - while I preferred no difference between the asphalt of the road and the E&N trail at the west side of Mary and the E&N, once installed, the bump is less than at other interfaces. I appreciate the improved implementation there, and encourage you to reduce the bump on all curb cuts around drainage to reflect this.
9. For the Multi-Modal Corridor Improvements, I would like to see the stretch of Esquimalt Rd between the E&N trail and Dominion St protected, to align with the upcoming installation of protected infrastructure along Esquimalt Rd. in the Township of Esquimalt. If protected, this would be my son's route to school, but currently we take a different route because there is no safe infrastructure between our home and his school, and we have to identify a lower traffic option (none of the options in Victoria currently have such low traffic to be safe for him to use).
10. As well, along multi-modal corridors, where two stage turns are encouraged, please install curbs outside of the bike lanes to facilitate these two stage turns. See here: https://www.instagram.com/p/DCb2_oEPRVL/ for an example.
11. For traffic calming initiatives, I encourage the City to shift from speed humps to chicanes, curb extensions and centre medians. I believe that the benefits achieved through the speed humps installed this year in Vic West between Esquimalt and Wilson Streets could have been accomplished more effectively with chicanes.
12. I would like to applaud the City on the work done on Bay St between Catherine and Tyee, and encourage the City to continue enhancements to Bay St along this stretch and to Pleasant in coordination with the work planned east of Pleasant St to Vancouver to create a continuous AAA route.
13. I would also like to thank the City for the beginning of the work along Selkirk Ave. This is a marked improvement over the road's previous condition. I would also encourage the City to fast-track connecting Selkirk from Styles to the Galloping Goose trail with a AAA route, either along Craigflower or through Banfield Park. Work along Craigflower could bring a secondary benefit of reducing vehicle speeds towards the 30 km/h speed. I would encourage a redesign similar to the stretch along Cook St from Caledonia to Pandora.
14. I note that a 10% increase in the police budget is proposed. I am not in support of this. I would rather see much of that money shifted to more sustainable solutions rather than the increase in law enforcement, including improving the design of infrastructure to reduce collisions, so that the demand on police response to collisions could be reduced.
15. One area I would note where police presence [has declined precipitously in BC is traffic enforcement](#). Enforcement can both reduce casualties and generate revenue. To reduce

casualties on Victoria's roads (fatalities and injuries), please demand that VicPD return traffic enforcement to 2010 levels. This ideally would be a revenue-neutral measure.

16. I would suggest a police budget increase at inflation ([given inflation in Canada is currently around 1.6%](#), I feel that is an appropriate level for the police budget increase). This would carve out around \$6.6 million from the police budget increase, which I think should be redirected towards improving the state of high-collision intersections (e.g., Bay and Tyee, Bay and Catherine, Bay and Quadra, Bay and Douglas, Bay and Blanshard... I feel like there's a common theme here) to reduce traffic violence-related calls. Noting that the City did not complete all of the proposed multi-modal network improvements for 2024, there is also the opportunity to implement those with these extra funds.

Thank you very much,

Personal Privacy

Victoria West

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Draft budget
Date: November 17, 2024 8:20:22 AM

As seniors we do not receive a raise in our income from CPP and OAS of 12+%, so where does the city expect us to cut in order to pay this very high increase in taxes on our property. Yes, we could defer taxes and let our children deal with it down the road. Or take out a reverse mortgage. This is not how we wanted to live the last decades of our lives.

It seems to me that some expenses in the draft budget could be lowered by small percentages without adverse effects on any one project. For example Irving Park located in James Bay was damaged by campers but dropping \$100,000 from its shared budget with another park would allow it to be almost but not quite perfect.

Try sending projects that would be “Nice to have “ to the back burner while only bringing “Absolute must do” projects to the front burner. Or doing them to within a budget that does not compromise the ability of the citizens of Victoria to pay. We simply annoy continually have the city wanting to spend more than it can afford?

[Personal Privacy](#)
citizen of Victoria BC

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Input on Draft Financial Plan
Date: November 17, 2024 9:33:40 AM

Thank you for reasonable timelines (for once) for tax payers to contribute perspectives to the financial plan, beyond 2025 - until the extension was announced in the Capital Daily I wasn't aware of the consultation period. I doubt I'm alone in this and find this to be the case with most City consultations.

I recognize like all things, the cost of running this city continues to grow, however increasing taxes on already overly taxed people is going to do nothing to address the unsustainable cost of living issue we have for the CRD.

- I disagree with some of the priorities where you intend to spend my tax dollars which are outlined below for both the upcoming year and your 3-year financial plan. - I encourage Council to look to a year of maintenance and evaluation versus further new initiatives
- I also ask that you make some key information available to the public PRIOR to finalizing this budget so we can provide informed comment.

1. Re policing budget

In principle I am in support of the police and EMS having the budget they need to do the work to keep the city and people safe. I've read the VicPD report and can see their rationale for yet another increase. I've read the efficiencies implemented. However, what I do not see is some assessment and evaluation available to the public for looking at how many resources are deployed for a given situation.

I live on [Personal Privacy](#) in VicWest and unfortunately I see and hear what is now constant sirens going back and forth between Victoria and Esquimalt, as well as multiple incidents on the road related to the horrible bike path design and intersection (more to come on that below). What I have personally seen from the ongoing growth of problematic situations in this area of VicWest includes:

- What seem to be excessive staff deployment for non-critical issues. Case in point:

Information I'd like to see to help me better assess this proposed budget includes:

- # of responses to repeat offenders that should really be in jail but the court system has failed citizen and not incarcerated
- Late Night Task Force needs to now be considering activities

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Vic 2025 budget - comments
Date: November 17, 2024 7:04:48 PM

My question is....how much money have you already spent on analyses on the redevelopment of Crystal Pool? Another \$600k for a referendum?

There was a referendum years ago about amalgamation of CRD local governments and our voice was never acted upon.

I am really tired of all of the money being spent on beautification and reducing traffic flow. Not everyone can or wants to ride a bike. More speed bumps? Beautification again?

I am happy the more money is going towards the VicPD budget and hope that there will be more protection for residents impacted by the unhoused constantly blocking the sidewalks around my area ([Personal Privacy](#)) and Pandora.

All i want to do is find a way to leave Victoria as it seems like all of the investments go towards everything but what I need or would benefit from. Happy to give but with another large increase, I would like something for a change and some more supports for business in areas impacted by the unhoused. When businesses leave, it makes it worse for residents.

Last year I spoke at a public meeting and I definitely do not feel like I was listened to or my issues considered, so question the authenticity of offering an opportunity to comment. Our strata also wrote to council years ago and we never received the common decency of a response.

[Personal Privacy](#)

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Taxes
Date: November 17, 2024 7:46:22 AM

By increasing taxes as you have been and propose to do, you are moving people from the middle class to the lower class. Increase should be limited to the annual cost of living increase. We can afford more.

Please stop paying for all “non-essentials” for a year or two to let us all catch up.

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Budget
Date: November 17, 2024 11:00:03 AM

Hello Council, thanks for the opportunity to provide input to the budget process...

First, let me say that I'm, in general, very supportive of the current Council. I'm impressed with the work you've done around housing and expediting approvals, agree with the Reconciliation projects, encouraged by the efforts to house everyone who needs it and deal compassionately with the mental health and addiction issues that exist on Pandora Ave and grateful for your efforts to continue to make Victoria one of the most bike-friendly cities in North America.

BUT, a 12%+ property tax increase is a non-starter. Residents have been feeling the pinch of inflation for a couple of years now and housing costs continue to rise - a 12% property tax increase will only result in landlords again raising rents (and homeowners being squeezed further). And, ultimately, I fear such an increase may result in a number of the current "progressive" Council Members being defeated at the polls and a far more fiscally (& socially) conservative group be elected next time around, which would be bad news for the city and its residents.

I realize you're in a very difficult situation, but think you have to find a way to bring the increase down to around 6%. Some possible suggestions (I don't much like any of them, but...):

- fewer capital projects or spread them out over a longer time
- defer the replacement of Crystal Pool for a few years
- increase user fees
- continue to encourage other municipalities to do their fair share with housing and emergency shelters
- continue on the path to amalgamation of municipalities and services

I appreciate the crunch you're in and wish you all the best in trying to navigate through often conflicting demands for service and the budget issues these raise.

Sincerely,
Personal Privacy

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Draft budget
Date: November 18, 2024 10:46:21 AM

Sirs:

1. Your proposed budget increase is too high. You want taxpayers to cough up 12% more next year when inflation is about 2% annually...you need to try harder to rein in your wish list.
2. Why are you buying downtown buildings like Hermann's Jazz club? Your job is to run a city, not rescue buddies.
3. Why are you redeveloping Centennial Square, changing it from an eyesore that is underused into a new eyesore that is underused? Your job is to run a city, not blow money on pet projects.
4. The city has a development charge to cover the extra infrastructure cost of a new development. Fair enough. But I see that you want to waive that charge for low-cost developments...will the new tenants not flush the toilet as often as those in high-cost developments? Your job is to run a city, not indulge in social engineering.
5. You have designed a Crystal Pool/Wellness Centre that is destined to fail in a funding referendum. The city does not need and will not support a \$250 million centre that promises to do everything for everybody. Why not have two funding possibilities: a \$40 million 25-metre swimming pool without a daycare/wellness/etc. component along with your gold-plated proposal. Victoria needs a pool suitable for kids, aquasize, swim lessons, etc., not a 50-metre pool for hosting Olympic-scale competitions.

Personal Privacy

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: City of Victoria budget
Date: November 18, 2024 4:36:20 AM

Everything that can be done to reduce costs for the building of new nonprofit housing units is critical. Reducing the amount spent on bike Lanes would certainly be a good idea if we're really trying to address the needs of a large group of Victoria's residents.

Personal Privacy

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From: [Victoria Mayor and Council](#)
To: [Personal Privacy](#)
Cc: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: RE: Property tax increase 12.2% opportunity for feedback to whom?
Date: November 18, 2024 12:35:38 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[image004.png](#)
[image005.png](#)
[image006.png](#)

Hi [Personal Privacy](#)

Thanks for your email. This email and legislativeservices@victoria.ca are the correct places to send your feedback on the 2025 budget.

Your comments from yesterday and the previous email you sent to Legislative Services on Wednesday October 30th will be included in the feedback to Council.

Thank you,

Nic Kokolski

Correspondence Coordinator
Communications and Engagement
City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square, Victoria BC V8W 1P6



The City of Victoria is located on the homelands of the Songhees Nation and Xwsepsum Nation.

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
Sent: November 17, 2024 1:17 PM
To: Victoria Mayor and Council <mayorandcouncil@victoria.ca>
Cc: GNA <gonzalesneighbours@gmail.com>
Subject: Property tax increase 12.2% opportunity for feedback to whom?

Hi,

To what e-mail should we address our concerns about a 12.2% property tax increase? Is this the correct place?

<https://www.timescolonist.com/local-news/victoria-extends-chance-to-weigh-in-on-budget-to-dec-20-9818508>

I strongly propose it remains at the average annual inflation rate of only 3% and that grants

and handouts to advocates and drug addicts be cut out entirely.

Thanks a lot.

Personal Privacy

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 draft budget
Date: November 19, 2024 11:55:24 PM

City Council,

These are my views on the proposed 2025 budget.

I've read through the details proposed budget and it's quite mind boggling to understand what it all means first off but I struggled through it all. The budget increases for the 2024 property taxes was absolutely ridiculous when the inflation rate was 4.4 %. And for 2025 the proposal for 12.17% increase is even worse. I have no problem with the requirements for fire and police, increases in wages, and continuing the ongoing work of infrastructure improvement for sewers, storm drains, road, traffic, etc. to come to nearer the actual rate of inflation. It's only common sense to scale back and slow down the plans for what remains.

Bicycle lanes and traffic: Why do we have to go crazy on bicycle lanes everywhere. Why isn't that bicycle plan spread over a longer term? There are already too many bicycle lanes and the city is like an obstacle course with neighbourhood streets taken over for bicycle paths. In neighbourhoods traffic is traditionally slow moving and bicycle lanes were never required. They just require signage noting a bicycle route. The way it's been laid out the traffic is always backed up on major roads, because many of the neighbourhood roads are blocked off. Instead of calming traffic, you've made it worse and more dangerous and with narrower car laneways. Would the world really come to an end if for one or two years you pulled backed on the bicycle laneways and did an actual review of how much the bike lanes are being used and compare how much more traffic has been pushed onto fewer roads?

In face myself and many many people in the area I talk to wish that you would take out the specialty bicycle designated streets on Vancouver and Richardson, and next to St. Ann's Academy. Again traffic is already slow on these streets and this was never needed or wanted in my neighbourhood; and was done against the residents of the area's wishes during the pandemic. Beautifying something does not make it functional or practical. It's like the tail is wagging the dog. I'm for protected bike lanes on major thorough fares, only on the side of the road for which vehicle traffic is moving. The lanes on Pandora are so confusing they're not used very much.

Parking: No one wants to drive downtown. You've made the parking too expensive and you have to drive around in circles wasting gas and increasing green house emissions. The downtown is not booming or vibrant. You've also cut down on parking required in new developments which is short sighted. If you buy anything more than a small bag it's too hard to get it home walking, on a bike or on the bus. I'm lucky I can still walk downtown on a good day, but so many people I know won't go downtown at all saying they can't drive downtown or find reasonably priced parking.

Charging for resident's vehicles: Why can we not do a more phased in approach over a longer period considering you've made it so difficult to park downtown anyways. You know, not everyone rides a bike. And all the new building construction will have charging units built in I expect.

I approve of charging facilities in the public works for city vehicles as that will save money in the long term, but the number of charging facilities for private cars should be pared down and fit in each year according to what's affordable within a reasonable increase in property taxes and how much money will come back to the city for their use. Myself and many other people will NEVER be able to afford an electric vehicle.

Bus passes: I'm sorry to say that the youth bus pass should be discontinued unless it's affordable within a reasonable cost of living increase in taxes. With so many seniors in Victoria, it would have been something to offer them the same bus pass and perhaps more of them would try to come downtown as long as the policing levels are kept up.

Park redevelopment: The plans to take away that beautiful tree in Centennial Square is terrible. That tree was there long before I was born in Victoria and I love seeing it lit up at Christmas. Unless that tree is damaged or sick, it should stay. Centennial square should find a way to preserve and honour the wonderful mosaics in the fountain

gifted to us from the other municipalities unless they are unrepairable. There is no need for a children's water park in Centennial Square. This is the wrong location for such a facility. It is totally impractical and I doubt it would be used very much by mom's and dad's. They'd have to bring all their bathing gear in on the bus and take their wet kid's home the same way as driving and parking is difficult. Probably the street people would be in there having baths rather than children playing. What a disaster. I may be wrong, but I'm guessing Centennial Square is probably where a lot of the money is being proposed to be spent for 2025-2026. It should be scaled back to something which is more suited for people enjoying sitting outdoors and entertainment events in the square.

Crystal Pool: The crystal pool should stay in it's current location and be refurbished/repared. That park property should not have any housing on it and should be kept as strictly a recreational property. It's well used by the community all year round. I remember walking down to the wading pool that used to be there when I was a child. Whenever I drive by there's always kid's playing in the basketball courts or baseball in the summer. The pool and facility is well used.

With all the housing projects underway in the capital region, one would expect that would result in increased property taxes being received by the city as there will be a larger amount of people owning homes. Surely it would make more sense to pause and let that potential increase in property taxes catch up. Many housing units were started during covid and I would think must be just about ready to go on the market soon. There's also many more newer housing projects underway in the city. I don't think the roads and streets can handle all the increased population because the streets are so clogged up with having to drive in circles just to try and get from home to medical appointments, groceries, etc. The one way streets, narrower lanes, fewer lanes, bike lanes, streets blocked off for bicycle traffic, posts sticking out of the road everywhere, etc., has just destroyed the ability to get around. It's like a huge confusing maze and obstacle course. No wonder no one wants to come downtown. It's hard to just drive to the grocery store.

Years past **Personal Privacy** improvements were planned over a longer period of time and property tax increases not as harsh. I cannot understand how you can continue to increase the budget beyond inflation. I understand that we need police, fire, and needed infrastructure like roads/traffic and public works, upkeep on current facilities.

My pension did not go up 8.37% in 2024 like the city's property taxes went up. CPP only went up 4.4%. And now you've decided to go for a 12.17% increase? This is unpalatable and unreasonable. You've lost your mind. It's time to be practical and make sense. Scale back and come back to the drawing board with a scaled down plan over a longer period of time until the number of residents increases with the new housing being built and revenue increases accordingly.

I hope you will take into consideration my point of view as you look at the 2025 budget. It needs a lot of adjustment.

Personal Privacy

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 City Budget Feedback
Date: November 20, 2024 2:32:45 PM

Hello,

I see that this is in the budget:

" \$945,000 for the OUR DWTN revitalization program to invest in the downtown core with a focus on beautification, programming, cleaning and enhanced safety and the activation of downtown spaces."

Will it be allocated to permanent changes to the downtown area or will it be spent instead on buying extremely overpriced temporary banners for all the streetlights?

Everything else looks great

Personal Privacy

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Budget 2025
Date: November 22, 2024 8:10:32 PM

Good evening. I would suggest this is about the 10th time I have written on this topic which would have included Mayors Lowe, Fortin, Helps and Alto and their respective Councils. I am hoping this lands with someone with courage and the leadership to make demonstrative and dollar saving decisions

The banter now is two fold.....

- VicPD needs more money
- Mayor Alto is asking staff to look at programs

My consistent messaging has been to look at staff. Particularly too many, doing too little

To my point, come by my local coffee haunt to see 3 to 4 to 6 staff enjoying coffee and a bun. Wonderful except I believe breaks are 15 minutes and not 35 or 40 as I consistently witness. Seems your arborists and grind & pave crews are most generous with taxpayers time. That's 35 minutes in the shop, possibly 20 minutes to and from the job site and we are into an hour. An hour x each member

If that is City of Victoria service, then perhaps those jobs need to be privatized to get a better bang for the taxpayer dollar. As I said, leadership and courage are required

As a senior staff person from the department responsible, how do you account for this time stealing. I've witnessed private companies do similar work in half the time or better

So if keeping this kind of work ethic on the payroll is important, then the public works bosses need to stand in front of Council and the VicPD and say their half baked work is valid. Public safety is not

I wonder where this email will land and who if anyone will challenge the status quo of outside workers

I wish you well in your deliberations

Personal Privacy

Reply from my iPhone

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Rescind plans to remodel Centennial Square
Date: November 22, 2024 3:10:16 PM

I do not support the City of Victoria's plan to take down the Centennial Square Fountain and would like th
Sent from my iPhones city council to remove this project from the city's 2025 budget.

Sincerely,
Personal Privacy

Victoria BC
Personal Privacy

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Cc: [Councillors](#)
Subject: Budget
Date: November 24, 2024 5:05:33 PM

The Mayor offered the following motion for consideration:

Council direct staff to:

(1) bring forward options to reduce the city's portion of the 2025 and 2026 property tax increase to 4%, 5%, 6% and/or 7% by:

- a. focussing on reducing services/programs that are property tax funded*
- b. focussing on services/programs that are ongoing*
- c. avoiding adding new services/program/assets*
- d. avoiding expanding services/program/assets*
- e. avoiding negatively impacting existing assets and increase deferred maintenance*
- f. pausing actioning new/expanded initiatives to reduce tax increase or avoid an additional tax increase, even if previously directed by Council, and*

(2) report back to Council on the implications of adjusting the ratio of the "Business and Other" tax class from 3.67 to 3, and or 2.5, as compared to the Residential rate.

I would propose that you have the goal of restricting the 2025 property tax increase to 4%.

- By;
1. considering the absolute necessity of each service/program that is ongoing v's "nice to have."
 2. not introducing Any new programs.
 3. actioning item f..

Further; Perhaps it is time to review all permissive tax exemptions with a lens on value delivered widely to the residents v's to special interests. For example does a sports organization have publicly accessible fields or restricted access? Does a religious organization have community outreach or is it primarily a place of worship? Etc..

It is time to stop the Centennial Square process and solely move forward with the Pizza Park. They are mere blocks apart.

Increasing differed maintenance is not a supportable option. I believe that is the first step of many previous councils, to the city's detriment.

Regards; Personal Privacy

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#); [Marianne Alto \(Mayor\)](#)
Cc: [Margaret Gardiner](#)
Subject: The Budget - Round 2 , the "how" of reducing the budget
Date: November 24, 2024 8:43:55 AM

Hello Council,

It was heartening to read the motion requesting city staff do further work be done on the budget..specifically “*bring forward options to reduce the city’s portion of the 2025 and 2026 property tax increase to 4%, 5%, 6% and/or 7% by looking at: ...*” (6 different areas of focus)

From a citizen’s perspective, 2 things:

1. Do not increase deferred maintenance. It’s too easy to kick the can down the road and defer what is needed to maintain city infrastructure. It’s too easy a target for “reductions” in the tax increase. Don’t do it.
2. Offering a range of “4 to 7%” increases will pretty much ensure that 7% becomes the measure of success. And, I have no idea if that (or any other number) is good or bad as there is NO information in the budget that offers context and perspective. A 2004 BUDGET number is used to show the percentage of expected increase in various categories. What was the ACTUAL spend in 2004 up to Nov ? What is projected for the 12 months ending December? Were the results of the SPEND in every category as expected and if not, why?

I resubmit my earlier letter on this topic which Council member Dave Thompson said he needed to “*forward to our Finance management team, who know far more about these points than anyone on Council does*”. While I appreciated his honesty, I found this response startling. Council will be voting on a budget without understanding the VERY basic metrics I outline in my letter? And if it’s too much detail/too complicated for Council to understand, I draw your attention to the last 2 lines of paragraph 2. The graphs/charts that can be produced will tell you what you need to know at a glance.

I have had no response from your “finance team”. Presumably, that means you don’t have the information either. If you did, you might just choose a different “target” reduction. Not easy. But necessary.

My “citizen input on the budget” letter, again, below. Thank you for reading...hopefully also listening.

What makes it difficult to offer thoughtful, educated input is that “information is missing from the budget” . We see, in the planned budget, the current budget for 2024 but not the actual “spend” YTD. I lived a business life that required “budget vs actual” reporting MONTHLY and then ANOVAR (analysis of variance) reports to the Board with complete information on ALL

variances over 5% , or over a specific number, for every line item. This was how I was required to run the business - to be accountable for funding AND for results.

Only when I understand what the 2024 budget accomplished with the money that was spent (and the reasons for over and underspent funds) would I be able to ask smart questions about the 2025/26 budget proposal. Yes, this could be getting WAY into the weeds and more learning/studying than what any ordinary community member (or government employee!) would be willing to do. BUT, with that information in hand and a smart young person running some AI analysis on those numbers using REALLY good queries....you could present charts and graphs and ‘predictive’ information that could be much more easily understood. AI IS your not-so-secret weapon for creating information that truly informs us citizens using context and data in minutes... even seconds.

It would also be interesting to see the spend trend lines month by month for this 2024 financial year on your ‘key categories’ of municipal spend. I’m guessing that the spend in any “underspent” categories (to the end of October) will suddenly accelerate and be “on” or “over” budget by the year end. This is the inevitable practice of all organizations (government and corporate) to ‘find a place to spend the money so we don’t lose the allocation to that line item for next budget." I have spoken with government employees who have actually been put in charge of finding places to spend the rest of the assigned budget(s) for their area just so the allocation in the subsequent budget isn’t reduced.

I’m sure the 2024/25 budget is an aggregation of what every department/project manager has prepared for their area with an eye to expected cost increases beyond last year’s budget (not actual). Good hearted folks wanting to do a good job in their area but NOT being told that they must CUT their spend by x% AND find creative solutions for getting the work done anyway. Yes they will complain mightily and gnash their teeth and struggle...but after that, they might just get down to work and figure it out. I did it for years so I know it’s possible - and to still get quality results. So now that big question...what ARE the expected results and what happens if they are met? Or not met?

Personal Privacy

Comments on 2025 budget for City of Victoria

As many avenues of contacting the Council have been eliminated, we now must write to Legislative Services to provide information. The city has very specific jurisdictional areas they are responsible for, there is no magic money, and budgets can be cut but there needs to be political will to do so.

Climate Change and Transportation

Climate change is important. Focus on getting BC Transit to provide more buses. Unless there are more buses people will continue to drive.

Climate Action – cut the budget in half for this year.

Do not put in an more chargers for e-vehicles. Most people with EVs charge at home. Put any in the works, on hold.

Parks and Recreation

Parks are used by more people, these need attention. But buying a lot on a busy road did not make sense. Sell it and buy somewhere else.

Cancel the upgrade to Centennial Square completely. No planning, no phases, just cancel it. Put funds towards the pool which is used more by the community you represent than the tourists.

Royal Athletic Park already had an upgrade this year. Delay that for at least another year. Charge the BC Lions full cost for the stadium if they want to come again. There is no way the "Accounting" for the event could add up to \$4million spent by people attending the event.

Housing

Other communities need to step up and provide housing for their residents. Please put pressure on other municipalities in the region for homeless shelters and low-cost housing.

Stop giving tax holidays to developers or drastically reduce the amount.

Business

Halve the \$945,000 for the Our DWTN budget. The businesses need to step up more if they want people to come downtown.

Review who receives funds for economic activity, reduce the amount.

Infrastructure

Cut the sidewalk budget in half or spread it over 2 years.

Community Grants

Cut the grant program by one third, \$6.2 is too much to hand out of taxpayers' funds for projects.

Staff and Councillors

No raises for management staff at the city for one year.

Reduce staff hours to save money on salaries.

Rollback raises to councillors. Reduce the current council salaries by 10% to show good will.

The police budget should be approved as is. The safety of citizens is paramount for the council.

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Proposed police budget
Date: November 26, 2024 9:59:38 AM

Good morning,

I've been a resident of Victoria for more than 25 years, having lived in several neighbourhoods over the course of them. Police presence has increased year over year, as has their budget. People and businesses have not seen a commensurate increase in safety, nor in closure rates for major crimes.

Rather, the VicPD have drained resources that could measurably improve life in the city. Better that they keep well funded libraries open and have adequately staffed community rec centres to keep kids occupied than police in schools. Better that supported living spaces are provided for people in poverty and addiction than we leave them to encampments that are violently dispersed by the police.

There are a multitude of studies demonstrating that social services do far more to reduce crime and improve quality of life. Businesses would fare better as well, and the downtown core would see improvement by leaps and bounds over time.

The time of giving VicPD all they demand and more while cutting virtually all other funding to do so must end. Safety and prosperity have declined the entire time, and we're left to ask why are the VicPD, proportionally the second largest force in Canada, incapable of using a third of Victoria's budget to meaningful effect?

Sincerely,

Personal Privacy

Homeowner & taxpayer

Sent from [Outlook for Android](#)

From: [Personal Pr](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Draft budget input
Date: November 26, 2024 4:36:46 PM

To whom it may concern,

I am a longtime Victoria resident. I work in the city as **Personal Privacy** and I am writing to you today to advocate for my community.

It is unacceptable that the city has been giving the largest portion of the budget by far to the police department. Statistically, violent crime is on a steady decline. Sociologically, the causes of crime are well known: poverty, lack of access to education, social alienation, breakdown of communities. The solutions are well researched and tested. Funding for education, mental health services, community programs, and a strong social safety net reduce crime. Increased police budgets do not reduce crime, and paradoxically, they often increase it. Nordic and European countries with strong social safety nets, true universal healthcare, and accessible education have far lower rates of crime, especially violent crime, than in North America. This is supported by all available evidence.

Here is what Victoria needs:

1. Investment in Social Programs:

a) Mental Health Services: Expand access to mental health professionals, crisis hotlines, and community-based mental health programs. Mental health supports that are not free are not accessible to most people.

b) Substance Abuse Treatment: Increase funding for addiction treatment and recovery programs (note: addiction is a side effect of poverty and untreated mental illness).

c) Affordable Housing: Provide support for public (non-market) housing initiatives to reduce homelessness and related crime.

d) Education and Job Training: Invest in early childhood education, and reverse the budget cuts for public schools. I was devastated when I heard that SD61 was cutting music programs. Kids need those programs! It is so important that they be able to do something productive and fulfilling, and have a community that supports them. I relied on the choir community in high school, sometimes it was the only positive thing in my day. These programs keep kids off the streets.

e) Community Centers and Youth Programs: Support community centers, programs for people of all ages and abilities, and after-school activities to provide positive outlets for young people.

2. Re-imagine Public Safety:

Community Policing: Foster stronger relationships between police and communities through community policing programs.

b) Crisis Intervention Teams: Send trained mental health professionals to respond to mental health crises.

c) Civilian Response Teams: Deploy trained civilians to handle non-criminal calls, such as noise complaints or traffic accidents.

We cannot ignore the limitations of traditional policing and the threats it so often poses to marginalized communities. We desperately need for a more holistic approach to public safety.

The solution is obvious. Re-direct funding to education, mental health services, infrastructure, and making housing available to all. By funding mental health services, substance abuse treatment, public housing, and education programs, we can prevent crime before it happens.

By taking these steps, we can build a safer, more just, and equitable community for all.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Personal Privacy

Victoria Personal
Personal Privacy

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Draft Budget Public Feedback
Date: November 27, 2024 9:42:29 PM

Hello City of Victoria Legislative Services,

I'm writing to voice my opinions on the 2025 Draft Budget. I read through parts of the Public Engagement Report, and it's wonderful to see so many voices being recognized, and so many diverse viewpoints being taken into consideration. The strong emphasis on Housing being the largest issue for nearly every Victorian is poignant, and emblematic of what a tough time we're all living in. An especially noticeable sentiment is how everyone wants more services, but no one wants taxes to increase. It's easy for the public to dream big, and difficult to put that into action as city officials. You have my sympathy and gratitude for the work you do.

I appreciate a great many of the services the city provides in its operational budget; I am only strongly opinionated against one of them, that being policing. Victoria's police service is bloated, ineffective, and violent. A quick search tells me that Victoria has 2.2 officers for every 1000 residents, a ratio which is far above the Canadian average of 1.8 officers per 1000 citizens (Statscan, 2023). And yet VicPD is asking for 4 additional sworn officer roles, and 3 additional civilian roles in 2025? We do not need more police in Victoria.

More police in Victoria will not bring safety to the unhoused population, which are constantly harassed, traumatized and victimized by our police force. More police will not bring peace of mind to the ill who have wellness checks called on them, only to be shot by the officers attending them. More police will not stop thefts of bicycles, or acts of vandalism. More police will not protect women fleeing spousal abuse from the very officers in power.

Please, reject the Victoria Police Department's requests for budget increases. Anything given is difficult to get back. And anything given is money that could be instead put towards community services that provide real, material aid to the vulnerable populations in our city. It brings me great joy to build a life in a city which already puts so much money towards community initiatives, arts, gardens, and more. I see what has already been done with so little, and I dream of a day when we can do so much more with the kind of operating budget currently given to the police.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter,

Personal Privacy

[Personal Privacy](#) Victoria

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Draft Budget
Date: November 28, 2024 2:41:00 PM

Hi there,

I'm writing in regards to the 2025 Draft budget that asks for an increased share for VicPD.

Our police force is already bloated, with 2.2 cops per 1000 residents, compared to the Canadian average of 1.8 cops per 1000. We do not need more cops on the streets in the middle of a housing crisis, harassing our unhoused neighbours.

These funds should be moving into social infrastructure that meets the basic needs of our community members and in turn prevents crime from happening at the root source (people being desperate and traumatized by the experience of being abandoned and subjected to violence by society).

I hope you hear and take these comments into consideration.

Thank you!

Personal Priv

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 budget input
Date: November 29, 2024 7:58:46 AM

Dear Council,

As someone who lives in Victoria, I'd like to share a piece of input on the 2025 budget. Vic PD already has more police officers per capita than the average Canadian city. Quite frankly police are not keeping the most vulnerable in this city safe, and never have. I strongly urge you to put money that could go to increased police budget into the arts and community growth instead. Small music venues are closing down rapidly, decreasing safe and creative spaces in the city. It's a scary time to be an artist, and I hope the city incorporates this into their budget. Additionally, sweeping Pandora and parks of people sheltering there will never be a solution, but rather entrenches homelessness deeper and strips people of their dignity. Please allocate funding for real support for these folks living in parks, and stop funding Bylaw's brutality. Thank you for taking the time to hear my thoughts.

Sincerely,
Personal Privacy

Victoria BC

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Draft budget
Date: November 29, 2024 10:49:50 AM

To Whom it May Concern,

My comments are not with regard to a specific budget item(s) but to an issue that encompasses various budget items. As the population grows, more automobiles are competing for a fixed amount of infrastructure. We know that building more roads simply induces demand and there's only so much space available for automobile infrastructure. As the increasing numbers of automobiles compete for finite infrastructure, behaviour of motorists becomes more and more dangerous as each driver negotiates the congestion and construction, fighting for parking, speeding, driving inattentively. I applaud the efforts of this and the past council in their efforts to improve infrastructure for vulnerable road users and I am a daily user of bike lanes but, outside of protected bike lanes, conditions are increasingly dangerous for cyclists and pedestrians. Motorists frequently express their frustration through speeding and reckless driving, jeopardizing the safety of vulnerable road users. Add to this the proliferation of high performance vehicles, technological distractions and increasing numbers of delivery vehicles and we have a chaotic situation on the roads. Not only is it dangerous but it creates an ugly ambience in our city. More needs to be done through enforcement, design and education to ameliorate this situation.

Thank you

[Personal Privacy](#)

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Budget Input
Date: November 29, 2024 8:21:23 AM

Thank you for the opportunity to respond regarding the 2025 Victoria Budget; only a few comments.

1) Enough of the bike lanes, time to yield to the special interest groups. We have enough of these bike lanes, and we want our vehicular transport corridors, part major feeder routes like Bay Street widened and improved, and this DOES NOT include bikes! Improve traffic flow.

2) Stop with the incessant parking tickets downtown and lower the astronomical parking prices. This is a deterrent for locals to visit the downtown core. Fix this.

3) Enforce existing laws regarding begging, loitering, street drug mayhem and in particular the dangerous begging on major intersections; insanity. As a seasoned traveller, we can honestly say that Victoria has the worst 'street problems' in the world. Enough!

4) Make the full length of Richardson Road inclusive to all (and this includes cars and traffic flow). Who ever let the local neighbourhood control the traffic agenda on this vital and historic traffic corridor anyways? Fairfield, Foul Bay, Cadboro Bay and Oak Bay Avenue have become dangerously clogged with slowed traffic due to your woke planning and implementation policies. Again, enough!

5) Upgrade and retrofit the existing Crystal Pool rather than tearing it down, work with what you've got. Take the leftover funds from this (and bike lanes) and improve the out of control homeless issue; and this includes more policing and enforcement of existing laws. Take back Victoria!

Thank you,
Personal Privacy
Taxpayers of Greater Victoria

Sent from my iPhone

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Public Input 2025 Budget Plan
Date: November 29, 2024 10:02:44 AM

Hi there,

My name is **Personal Privacy** and I am a resident of Victoria. I am reaching out to express concern about VicPD's proposition to increase their budget for 2025. I, along with many other vic residents, do not believe VicPD should have an increase in budget. Victoria already has more law enforcement officers per 100 000 residents than any other canadian city. I urge whoever it may concern to represent the residents by pushing to not expand VicPD further.

Thank you,

Personal Priv

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Engagement-External](#); [Public Hearings](#)
Subject: Written comments for 2025 Draft Budget
Date: December 1, 2024 12:34:18 PM
Attachments: [2025 Draft Budget - written comments.docx](#)

Hello,

I am writing to submit a written comment about the 2025 draft budget.

I have tried to send the letter to legislative services, as suggested on the [website](#) (legislativeservices@victoria.ca); however, I've gotten a bounce-back email three times.

Can you please pass this letter (attached) along to the correct channel?

Please let me know if this isn't possible and I will submit the letter in person.

Thank you very much for your help!

Sincerely

[Personal Privacy](#)

Dear Elected Officials and the Victoria/Esquimalt Police Board,

I am a ^{Persona} year old queer man who has lived in Victoria for the past 15 years. In my time living in Victoria I have witnessed the impact of growing wealth inequality in our community.

I am writing to express my concern and frustration about the proposed increase in the Victoria Police Department (VicPD) budget. I am demanding that the VicPD budget is frozen so that the limited municipal budget can be allocated to supports and programming that are desperately needed and to communities who have been historically underfunded and ignored. At this moment there are dire and pressing needs for our community and it is clear that police funding makes our community less safe. It is my belief that poverty is a political choice and our elected officials can make decisions to alleviate the impact of poverty in our community.

I am sickened that Victoria's governing bodies continually allocate a greater percentage of the municipal budget to the VicPD than any other municipal function. Even though, in 2023, Victoria had 121% more police officers per capita than the Canadian average ([statistics canada](#)), and the VicPD's reporting shows a decline in violent crime, the police budget continues to represent the single largest item in the City's budget and this budget has been steadily increasing year over year.

Several weeks ago I witnessed 4 VicPD officers physically drag a man from a downtown grocery store, because the man had attempted to shoplift food. These "crimes of poverty" or "non-violent crimes" are, as the VicPD reports, on the rise in Victoria. I think it is shameful to address the human need for food with enforcement and criminalization.

I am calling upon you, and all our elected officials, to **freeze the VicPD budget and begin meaningful action to divest resources from the Victoria Police Department and invest in meaningful change.**

Increased police presence does not keep us safe. Instead, it continues to oppress and harass our most targeted community members (Indigenous, Black, people of colour, transgender, Two-Spirit, queer, people who use drugs, unhoused people, street-based sex workers, people with disabilities, people experiencing poverty, etc.), and puts their lives at risk.

Instead of investing even more resources in the VicPD, our city must prioritize and fund alternatives like community outreach programs, food security programming, anti-colonial mental health services, housing initiatives, income security, harm reduction services, arts and cultural programs, anti-colonial forms of social work, conflict resolution services, restorative justice, and other vital community-based support systems. These initiatives must support our most targeted communities and centre the

experiences of IBPOC folks in Victoria. This will require partnering with, funding, and otherwise supporting community-based organizations, instead of increasing the VicPD budget.

I am calling on you to use your power to create a safer city for us all by freezing the VicPD budget and meaningfully engaging with targeted communities to determine how to work with them to meet their needs.

Yours sincerely,

Personal Privacy

Personal Privacy

From: Personal Privacy
Sent: December 1, 2024 9:01 AM
To: Legislative Services email
Subject: 2025 Draft Budget input

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input. We hope that careful review and consideration of the public's input is undertaken through this process.

1) It should be a given that the City's focus is on ensuring the budget is prioritized on core local government services. We noted housing affordability was the highest ranked response from the survey. Affordable housing is primarily the responsibility of the provincial and federal governments. While local government are active in this area, this should not drive the budget. By core local government services, we mean the provision water, wastewater, solid waste, parks and recreations, streets & traffic management, police, fire. Ensuring these services are well managed, efficient and in a state of good repair contributes to making the community safe, healthy and affordable, and helps to build residents' confidence and satisfaction with city governance.

25) With a proposed 12+% increase, we recommend focusing on the core services for the City. Centennial Square is functional; the planning and reconstruction of it can be postponed with no negative impact to the area but a positive impact to the budget. Now is not the time to host events such as CFL games that cost \$450,000, the City and its many partners already provide a variety of engaging activities throughout the year without having to include costly one-offs that only benefit a few.

3) There is a notable decline in the level of service in certain neighbourhoods (Vic West, Burnside Gorge, North Park) - graffiti removal, public garbage bins not adequately attended, parks not been tended to, road surfaces degrading.

4) Equity across neighbourhoods for services and amenities - such as tree cover, active transportation, and road maintenance. The annual leaf pick up schedule shows which neighbourhoods are most treed (picked up first) and those with the least (Burnside Gorge, Vic West, North Park). These latter neighbourhoods tend to be the ones that host supportive and affordable housing as well - without an increase in maintenance and protective services to manage impacts.

5)The City takes on the policing cost for the region on urban core issues (homelessness, addictions, encampments). The City should be seeking to offset these costs through advocating for regional and provincial contributions or a regional policing servicing model.

Thank you for your attention to these matters.

Personal Privacy

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Draft Budget Feedback
Date: December 2, 2024 4:11:36 PM

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you in support of the motion to decrease the police budget in favour of other essential services such as education, housing, and general infrastructure. According to your own statisticians, violent crime fell over 6% this year. Police officers should get fewer overtime hours, and more officers should be hired to work at the standard rate. Additionally, the bloated salaries of high ranking employees ought to be cut, and the money redirected to hiring more staff. No one working for the municipal government should be earning more than \$150,000, and I think that that is generous enough already. The average citizen of Victoria does not make nearly that much, in fact the median income for individuals in Victoria in 2023 was less than \$60,000. Given that we are in the midst of a cost-of-living crisis, more money ought to be expended to lower the cost of living in Victoria.

Sincerely,

[Personal Privacy](#)

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Re: Tax break for Rentals and Passive Houses
Date: December 3, 2024 4:17:53 PM

To summarize,

- 1) Property rentals tenanted at or below market value should be eligible for the principal residence tax deduction.
- 2) Passive homes should be eligible for an additional deduction based on their positive contribution towards the province's goal of being net zero by 2032.

This would incentivize the creation of more rentals and more passive homes.

Thank you,

Personal Privacy

From: Personal Privacy
Sent: Tuesday, December 3, 2024 4:08:09 PM
To: legislativeservices@victoria.ca <legislativeservices@victoria.ca>
Subject: Tax break for Rentals and Passive Houses

Dear council members,

Does the city want to encourage rental housing and passive house developments? Or penalize people who have gone the extra mile to do the right thing, through tax increases to already inflated tax bills?

The city encourages rental housing through developments. For example, my development was only passed with passive house and rental covenants.

YET landlords pay more tax on their rentals than principal residences. Strata owners were hit with a 13% increase to strata insurance last year, among other rising costs. Allowable increases to rent are less than the increased costs that landlords are facing. Do you want rental housing? Or do you want to penalize landlords with higher tax bills? It can't be both.

Why are land lords expected to pay the difference between the rising costs of living and provincially regulated rental increases?

Further, what is the city doing to honor people who are paying a premium and contributing to your city by building rentals at the highest standard of efficiency? What is the incentive to pay significantly more up front, if the inflated value and lack of discount on tax are essentially a penalty for ownership? By the city's values and goals, shouldn't people with the lowest footprints (passive house owners) be rewarded and taxed less?

Thank you,

Personal Privacy

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Budget 2025 Feedback
Date: December 3, 2024 9:01:11 AM

Good morning, I have the following feedback on the 2025 budget along with suggestions to reduce the proposed tax increase. I appreciate this is a difficult process and believe that a true sign of governance and leadership is to make difficult decisions and pause some projects to save dollars.

- Delay the Centennial Square Revitalization project - Savings of approx \$7million dollars. This project in my opinion could be delayed and provide a step in the right direction of council signalling that you are serious about cost reductions.
- Can you provide additional information on the increase in the City Managers office. It seems to be a high increase and may be an area of savings.
- Has council considered sharing services with other municipalities in Greater Victoria? I see areas such as IT systems, administrative services, FOI requests etc that could save dollars amongst the various municipalities as the systems and processes etc are not unique to each municipality. This would reduce the technical debt. Personal Privacy
shared services for the Provincial Government and believe if they can do it we should be able to in Greater Victoria. I do appreciate that there are some challenges with shared services however the benefits I believe outweigh the challenges.
- Work with the Provincial Government to have a regional Police and Fire department for the Capital region.
- Look to charge other municipalities for the increased in costs to Victoria taxpayers for sending their unhoused citizens to the City of Victoria for services.
- Look to sharpen the pencils in all areas from thinking as a taxpayer.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback to the proposed 2025 budget and look forward to a reduction on proposed property tax increase.

Personal Privacy

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Feedback on budget
Date: December 3, 2024 10:02:48 PM

Hello Council,

Thank you for receiving feedback on the 2025 Budget. I would like to broadly support the budget. I particularly am in favour of the capital costs for multi-modal corridor improvements, and I would be happy to increase the amount for cycling, transit, and the David Foster Harbour pathway if needed. I also support the funds for the Crystal Pool.

The only thing I am not in support of is the requested 9.71% increase for the VicPD. I feel that every year, they ask for a significantly larger increase than other publicly funded entities that are largely labour expenses, and threaten service cuts if we do not agree. This is a very large single year budget increase, and I think it should not be awarded. This is an increase of \$7 million, which is more than the entire library budget, the cost of maintaining the roads, or the capital costs of multi-modal corridor improvements.

Overall though, I am in favour of the priorities outlined in the budget.

Thank you again for taking feedback.

Personal Privacy

Victoria, BC

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: No property tax increase!
Date: December 4, 2024 9:24:34 PM

Hello Council Members,

I am urging you not to raise property taxes. The rising cost of living is collapsing families. Despite making ends meet, I feel crippling fear surrounding the rising cost of basic needs like water, shelter and food.

Parents are raising children in fear. It's scary and it's unhealthy. These are your nurses and health care workers, your transit drivers, food service workers, teachers, government workers, construction workers, military etc living in fear and anger. The socio-emotional effects on the population and future generations of recent increases to cost of living and hence decreases in freedom, are profound.

Over the last few years, we've seen unprecedented increases to cost of living.

- implementation of carbon tax
- 2025 proposed increases to carbon tax
- interest rate hikes
- Food has doubled and tripled in price
- Home and strata insurance have increased

To name just a few.

It's too much! This all compounds on the individuals who are supporting the economy - your tax paying population, or what's left of them. Many people are giving up completely.

The food bank use is at an all-time high with staggering statistics. Your population is suffering. Too many children are going hungry, yet we're aiming to raise the cost of living further? For what?

When you raise the tax rate 12% on home values that are inflating, you're compounding the effects of the tax increase on people. Just like the federal government are compounding GST on top of carbon tax. It's unethical.

And yet housing remains in crisis. Not only due to availability, but due to cost. Increases in property tax, rates, insurance etc need to be passed on to renters through rental increases. Stop taking advantage of the hard-working people. Stop shifting the blame onto landlords (or "landleeches", as I have heard them referred to as, on many a Facebook forum) and look at your own operations.

Instead of raising taxes, focus on facilitating more housing. Raise the tax base by increasing the number of homes paying tax and the number of people who can afford to own a home. Stop hiring (highly paid) planning staff to make up complicated rules that inhibit growth and drive up the cost of development. Of the council meetings I have been to, I have watched people have their developments turned down over minutia or because council didn't read the proposal, driving up the cost of housing. I have heard countless horror stories of trying to get new housing through city and council.

Take a look at how the city of Victoria is run and see where improvements can be made. It's well known among residents that The City has a toxic culture and is not run well. How can that be improved?

Do better with what you have. Get lean. Evolve.

Stop throwing tax payer money at problems and start serving your tax payers. A city staff informed that there was an excess budget for roads, so we all got speed bumps? Come on... How is this helpful to an aging infrastructure or deficient police budget?

As people become less interested in living in Victoria and traveling downtown, your city is collapsing, your population is unhappy and you're in charge because the citizens of Victoria voted for you.

Thank you,

Personal Privacy

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Draft Budget 2025
Date: December 4, 2024 10:40:55 AM

To Whom it May Concern:

I was dismayed to see the 2025 draft budget, particularly how 23% of funds are to be allocated to police while just 2% are for libraries and 9% for parks, recreation, and facilities. At a time when many neighbourhoods are veritable library deserts (I'm looking at you, Fernwood, Hillside, Fairfield, etc.) and the libraries that do exist have a paucity of programming, this seems backwards. Furthermore, how is it that securing a spot for your kid in swimming lessons in this city is harder than scoring Taylor Swift tickets?

The city's priorities, as reflected in this budget, literally value the expansion of the carceral state over the public services that keep communities healthy, thriving, and out of conflict with the law. Please swap the police budget with that of libraries and parks and then try again.

With disappointment,

Personal Privacy

From: Personal Priv
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 draft budget feedback
Date: December 4, 2024 10:05:01 AM

First and foremost, 23% of the city budget for Victoria Police is alarming and needs to be addressed. How is it that the Victoria Police are receiving the largest amount of funding in comparison to so many other services? Defunding the police might be overly ambitious, but certainly it's not reasonable to provide them with more funding than ever, especially more funding than so many other essential services. The fact that property taxes will increase substantially to meet the unnecessary budget increase for the police is highly disappointing and extremely ironic as it further disparages those faced with housing insecurity, inevitably resulting in more homelessness in our city (the suspected factor that police use as leverage to create an illusion of a need for our safety).

Police do not need more money, and Victoria does not need more police.

It should be taken into careful consideration the implications of property tax hikes. The more money is required to pay for housing in Victoria, the more people will end up without a place to live.

I believe that all resources allocated to arts, music, and culture in Victoria have been of great benefit to our community, and I look forward to more arts funding and programming in the future. Obviously a city cannot operate on the arts alone, but we must consider the quality of life for those still living here, albeit precariously.

In summation, less funding for police and more funding for the arts. Ideally far less funding for the police. There should be absolutely no budget increase for the police from previous years. If anything it should be reduced, and homeowners and renters of Victoria shouldn't have to worry about paying more money in taxes in order to fund a service that does not serve or protect.

I love Victoria and intend to stay as long as possible, but every year that becomes more difficult due to the increased cost of living directly attributed to increase of property tax and subsequently increased cost of rent. Less police funding would mean less property tax which would result in less rent increase and would help prevent more homelessness.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Draft budget
Date: December 4, 2024 7:58:45 AM

Hello,

I am a Perso year who has lived in Victoria since Personal Priv I am in the demographic that is lucky to own my home. I live downtown and plan to keep getting around by cycling and walking.

My priorities for the city are to expand and support our cultural and artistic sector. I value the “soul” these ventures bring to our city and the important role they play to build community, entertain and enlighten us. I would like to see our city nurture the upcoming and established artists. Definitely I do not want us to become a “No Fun City” like Vancouver is becoming. I applaud the many initiatives the present and past council have taken and encourage you to keep up in this area.

Cheers,

Personal Privacy

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Budget Feedback
Date: December 4, 2024 4:07:42 PM

Hi

My feedback for the budget is to applaud continued infrastructure upgrades for the City and hope for a continued increase in spending for protecting the arts/music community within Victoria. More community spaces/ expanded use for community gathering, arts events, music events, and festival supports etc. It has been nice to see the trend of the city supporting with purchasing buildings that arts spaces rent out and it would be nice to see continued support in that direction to keep art events as close to free as possible when outside groups use them / book events.

I would be remiss if I didn't also disagree with the year over year increases for VicPD but understand they feel the need to request such a budget in a capital city with a legislature but still etc etc.

--

[Personal Privacy](#)

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Draft Budget Comments
Date: December 7, 2024 7:45:05 PM

Hello,

Bottom line a 12.5% increase or anything near it is not acceptable nor defensible.

The average wage increase is around 5%. Inflation is near 2.5%.

Like all of us you need to prioritize, rank accordingly and live within limits.

It's our money and you need to remember this.

Kind regards
Personal Privacy

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 budget
Date: December 8, 2024 1:48:17 PM

Some thoughts on the upcoming budget plan from long time Victoria residents:

- Community safety and well being are of primary importance, especially police budget requests.
- Crystal Pool replacement and necessary maintenance should be a PRIORITY in the recreational folder.
- Big NO to the Centennial Square redesign-Totally wrong design. For example who thought a water park would be used or it is a good idea to remove the Sequoia tree. Agree the square needs a makeover, get rid of the "stairs", plant more trees and grass; green it up. We can't afford a project like this at this time.
- Hold off on the pickle ball hub at the moment for the same reason
- Postpone playground upgrades to Irving and Pemberton parks
- Hold or stop the annual reconciliation donations to the local nations until the spending is targeted.
- Climate action plans look good.

Personal Privacy

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Councillors](#)
Cc: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Tax"s
Date: December 10, 2024 12:19:26 PM

Tax Increase Reduction Options

Council, City of Victoria

Only Option 4. 4% Tax Increase 2025/26 adequately achieves this directive. Option 4 2025/26 Is the only sensible decision

*"To achieve this direction, staff used the following methodology:
follow the principles outlined in the November 14, 2024 Council resolution:
focus on ongoing, property tax funded programs and services
avoid adding new or expanding services/programs/assets
avoid negatively impacting existing assets and increase deferred maintenance
cause actioning new/expanded initiatives to reduce tax increase or avoid an additional tax increase, even if previously directed by Council"*

Option 4 - 2025/26 aligns with YOUR directive to

*"Ensure alignment with results from the statistically valid Ipsos public consultation survey for financial tools to balance the budget, which identified the following preferred order:
Reduce service levels
Increase user fees
Introduce new user fees
Reduce the number of services offered
Postpone infrastructure projects
Increase taxes "*

I would make the following comments.

- A 4% increase adequately compensates for current inflation rates
- Option 4 requires the comprehensive review of city programs for redundancies and efficiencies
- Council must address the tendency to include too many Nice To Have items in city priorities
(Herman's is only one example)
- Over the years the council's involvement in Social Issues has greatly exceeded its mandate
- Any increase in budget affects renters as well, through their landlord's flow thru cost of doing business, equally to individual property owners
- Significant operating costs are pending with Council Raises, the Crystal Pool replacement, the Centennial Square upgrade and the Romeo's Park. (Either Centennial Square or the Romeo's Park should be dropped, preferably Centennial Square)

You said it. Now please make it happen.

Regards.
Personal Privacy

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Cc: [Victoria Mayor and Council](#)
Subject: 2025 Budget Feedback
Date: December 10, 2024 5:01:26 PM

Hello Mayor and Council,

I wanted to take this opportunity to share my thoughts as you go through the process of budget deliberations.

I understand the city is under pressure to find savings and reduce the proposed tax increase. While I support much of the proposed budget I do think the centennial square rebuild could be delayed or significantly scaled back. While I appreciate the square has some physical challenges with the fountain and the stairs I think it's biggest problem is lack of purpose which could be addressed, at least partially, for less money then rebuilding the square.

I would also like to put my support behind the proposed expenditures for new bike lanes and improved pedestrian crossings on Tolmie, Cook, Bay, and Blanshard. These new and improved facilities will be a great and worthwhile addition to the city.

I would also like to support the proposed continued investment in Topaz park, the area near the skate park has so much potential for basketball, tennis, and pickleball courts. In this dark time of year it is so hard to find anywhere public with lights like those are already installed at Topaz park. Failing to build at least some courts here feels like a big missed opportunity to improve winter recreation in the city. If the Topaz park pickleball courts don't make the cut, I would suggest the city consider other cheaper options to expand capacity for the game by double lining all tennis courts in the city and adding more pop up type courts similar to what was done in Beacon Hill park, perhaps even in centennial square.

Thanks for your time and consideration,

Personal Privacy

From: [Douglas Baer](#)
To: [Victoria Mayor and Council](#); [Legislative Services email](#); [John Hicks](#); [Fred Billingham](#); [Ross Kenny](#)
Cc: [Colleen Sparks](#)
Subject: 2025-2029 Draft Financial Plan Tax Increase Options
Date: December 12, 2024 4:46:21 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

December 12, 2024

Dear Mayor, Council, and City of Victoria staff,

Re: 2025-2029 Draft Financial Plan – Tax Increase Reduction Options

We're writing in response to the staff report for this week's Committee of the Whole meeting identifying tax increase reduction options.

As representatives of Capital Bike's Local and Advocacy Committees for Victoria we urge you not to go forward with any option that cuts the draft budget allocations to the proposed multimodal corridors, improvements to pedestrian or transit infrastructure, or the pocket parks and plazas needed to create low traffic neighbourhoods.

Victoria is making good progress increasing active transportation use across the city but is still far from its goals of providing sustainable and safe transportation options for people as committed through Go Victoria and the Vision Zero goal of eliminating road fatalities and serious injuries on our streets.

The funding commitments outlined in this year's draft financial plan for multimodal corridors should be the floor not the ceiling when it comes to additions of safe, convenient, and high-quality road infrastructure. Any cuts to this budget would represent a serious setback to the goals mentioned above and would undermine the City's commitment to providing affordable options for getting around the community. Not only that, but increased investments in active transportation will be critical to addressing climate pollution from on-road transportation, which makes up 40 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions in the city. Victoria has ambitious climate targets to meet, including the Go Victoria and CleanBC vehicle kilometers travelled reduction targets.

Following our previous letter of November 14, we believe the current draft allocations for multimodal corridors should be enhanced to support protected intersections in more locations, protection along the full routes of identified projects, and additional routes for design work.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input and we look forward to a positive outcome that supports safe active transportation in our community.

Douglas Baer, Advocacy Chair, Capital Bike
Joel Satre, Advocacy Co-Chair, Capital Bike



Douglas Baer
Secretary & Advocacy Co-Chair

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Draft Budget Public Input - prioritize arts and culture
Date: December 13, 2024 4:54:24 PM

Hello Council,

I respect this is a difficult decision and there are many competing demands.

I urge you to prioritize funding for Arts & Culture including:

- Music strategy
- Major Events and Initiatives
- Following through on grant to Other Guise for new cultural hub
- Cultural Infrastructure Grants (awesome program!)
- Festival Project Grants

These small investments make a major impact on the liveability of this city. They make it a more dynamic, more welcoming, and more enjoyable place to work, to live, and to visit.

By making relatively small investments in the nonprofit sector, we can attract funding from other levels of government, private sector and volunteerism. No one can stretch a dollar further than an arts nonprofit organization! It is the most cost efficient use of public funds.

Thank you for your service.

Best regards,

Personal Privacy

Victoria, BC

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Property Tax Review
Date: December 13, 2024 7:30:16 PM
Attachments: [Property Taxes 1.pdf](#)

It's refreshing to see the Mayor and Council taking action to instruct staff to explore ways of trimming the budget and keeping property tax increases in check. This is long overdue—property owners, whether residential, commercial, or industrial, simply cannot bear tax hikes year after year that outpace inflation. What's even more concerning is the risk of taxes surpassing the 3% rent increase cap for residential tenancies in 2025. To add insult to injury, introducing higher fees (such as sewer and stormwater charges) in place of property tax increases is both unfair and misleading.

It's time for Mayor and Council, along with staff, to think beyond the usual budget cuts. They must seek not only cost savings but also innovative ways to boost the city's revenue *without* relying on property taxes. The challenge is clear: what creative revenue streams can we tap into? Ideas like corporate naming rights for buildings and parks, advertising at playgrounds and sports fields, or even a \$10 disembarkation fee for the nearly one million cruise ship passengers who visit Victoria each year—this could generate up to \$9.5 million annually, potentially earmarked for police and bylaw enforcement.

The possibilities are endless, yet staff and Council seem to be overlooking many of them. For instance, why aren't we leveraging our world-renowned location to attract more events and the movie industry, without offering tax breaks in exchange? Rather than allowing these industries to reap the benefits of working in Victoria, why aren't they contributing a percentage of their earnings to help sustain our city's infrastructure?

It's time to think bigger. Victoria deserves leadership that sees beyond the status quo and taps into new, creative sources of revenue that reflect our city's unique position as one of the most desirable places on the planet.

Personal Privacy Victoria BC



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The possibilities are endless, yet staff and Council seem to be overlooking many of them. For instance, why aren't we leveraging our world-renowned location to attract more events and the movie industry, without offering tax breaks in exchange? Rather than allowing these industries to reap the benefits of working in Victoria, why aren't they contributing a percentage of their earnings to help sustain our city's infrastructure?

It's time to think bigger. Victoria deserves leadership that sees beyond the status quo and taps into new, creative sources of revenue that reflect our city's unique position as one of the most desirable places on the planet.

Personal Privacy Victoria BC

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Comment on budget proposal
Date: December 13, 2024 4:19:39 PM
Attachments: [image0.png](#)
[image1.png](#)

Hi there,
My name is [Personal Privacy](#) and I am a resident of Fairfield.

I am strongly against increasing VicPDs budget by 12.8%. This money should be put into more affordable housing, supportive housing and sheltering services. This income should be put into education and greater Victoria libraries which is supportive of citizens living here.

Consider these two attached images in the violent effect police have on marginalized community members of Victoria. The police does not need anymore money than the millions they already receive.

Please listen to community members concerns and adjust the budget to better suit the needs of living as people in this city, rather than suit the police.

Thanks

[Personal Privacy](#)



From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Cc: Personal Privacy
Subject: 2025 Budget considerations
Date: December 13, 2024 2:17:30 PM

I admit to having read only the Summary of the 2025 Budget. However, there are some things that stand out as unnecessary at a time when the City cannot afford them.

- The Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations do not need the residents of Victoria to pay them \$200,000 every year in perpetuity as some kind of ‘rent’. Both of these Nations have been paid \$41 Million by the Federal government already for this very purpose.
- While I agree that City roads require periodic restoration, spending \$9M for multi-modal improvements is a waste of money, if by that term you mean dedicated bike lanes, bus lanes, and Woonerfs
- Traffic calming measures are not required. Residents need to respect the neighbourhoods they are driving in, and act accordingly. The City cannot relieve them of this responsibility.
- Accessibility improvements should be done *only* when the sidewalks in question are being torn up for some other reason. Do not destroy a perfectly good sidewalk. We cannot afford it.
- You MUST scrap the Centennial Square “revitalization” project. It is not needed, it is not wanted, and as planned, is a foolish waste of money.
- The Crystal Pool Replacement/Rehabilitation Project is so far off the rails of good sense as to approach criminality. Where did the estimators get their figures? Another city (Edmonton) is doing the same thing for \$41M, and you want to spend \$209M?? And, Edmonton has to prepare for sub-zero weather to boot. Re-visit this, and bring back a plan in line with common sense.
- How does an existing park re-design (RAP) cost \$800,000 for just the design?? Who are you hiring??
- How can you spend \$13.5 M to plan the area, housing, development approvals, urban design, and heritage?? You already have a staff whose job that is. Why are you outsourcing? And lose the “social planning and equity” mantra. Not your job.
- Trim back on the Grants programs. We cannot afford it, if Council is raising taxes by 12.17%.

Even if you do half of these recommendations, you will not need a tax hike, and have money left over to pay for more police boots on the ground, which will go a long way to solving the rest of the problems.

Sincerely,
Personal Privacy

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Cc: Personal Privacy
Subject: Tax Increase
Date: December 13, 2024 8:21:07 PM

I respectfully submit that the tax increase should be no more than the rate of inflation or the increase in the cost of living. We all have to live responsibly within our incomes and it is not unreasonable to ask our city to do the same. The proposed increase could well be as much as FIVE TIMES the current rate of inflation and blaming this eye popping increase on external factors such as supply chain issues etc is simply not acceptable. I appreciate that cutting services or expecting more from the resources that you do have available is a difficult exercise. That however is the job that you were hired to do, so please don't demand that local business and homeowners pick up the bill for programs, initiatives and projects that may well have merit but are not necessarily something we can afford.

Finally, please don't insult my intelligence by referring to the proposed property tax increase as a "LIFT" As the old saying goes, if it walks like a duck, looks like a duck and quacks like a duck then it's definitely a duck!! An increase is an increase is an increase and calling it a "LIFT" doesn't change that in any way whatsoever.

Thanks for opportunity to comment on this matter

Personal Privacy

Victoria BC
Personal Privacy

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Comments on 2025 Draft Budget
Date: December 13, 2024 1:13:31 PM

To whom it may concern,

I was appalled to see the City of Victoria giving the VicPD a 12.5% increase in budget. Clearly the problems this city is facing are not being solved by increased police presence when VicPD aggravates more problems than it solves, and is directly responsible for the deaths of people in the city of which there has been zero accountability.

For example, the violent displacement of unhoused people, the most vulnerable in your community that you are responsible for, is conducted by the VicPD on a daily basis. These sweeps lead to deaths of unhoused people, lives that VicPD are responsible for and continuously costs this city heavily, with no evidence of benefit (<https://cheknews.ca/4-7-million-price-tag-to-enforce-daytime-sheltering-in-victoria-sweeps-possibly-deadly-1228701/>). Have we seen any improvement in the housing crisis though? No, because you are dumping tax payers dollars down the drain into displacing struggling unhoused people that have nowhere else to go.

When the line between housing and no housing for the majority of the City of Victoria is only a couple of bad months or losing your job when employment becomes scarcer and scarcer, how is giving the VicPD a 12.5% increase in budget helping beyond creating more wardens in the prison of the housing crisis across this country? Where is your loyalty to the people who elected you? For once, think beyond the status quo to actually make change.

Do better.

Personal Privacy

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Input on Victoria's Draft Budget 2025
Date: December 14, 2024 10:32:55 AM

Hello,

My name is ^{Personal Privacy}, I live at **Personal Privacy**. I'm writing today to share my thoughts on Victoria's Draft Budget for 2025. These thoughts are my own and are not affiliated with where I am employed.

I am very disturbed by the proposed increases to the Victoria Police Department in general, but specifically in contrast to how little the annual Reconciliation Grant is.

The RCMP was created to discriminate, oppress, and eliminate Indigenous peoples across the country so that First Nations could lose autonomy, their land stolen and repopulated by settler colonial immigrants and abused for resource extraction. Further, their languages, cultures, and children were stolen from them through horrifically violent methods.

Please watch this video, [“The RCMP was created just to forcefully remove Indigenous people off their lands”](#) for an explanation from Tsakë ze’ Howilhat Freda Huson.

The general harm of settler colonialism has been acknowledged by all levels of governance in Canada. However, proficient action is still not being taken to shape a better future for reconciliation on a federal, provincial, and municipal level. The RCMP was designed for, and facilitated, the pursuit of utter destruction of the First Nations. **I think the City of Victoria must go past acknowledging the harms of how Canada treats Indigenous peoples in general and come face-to-face with the ongoing harm at a direct source: the policing body of our city.**

The Victoria Police Department, although separate from RCMP operations, is intertwined with the RCMP's history, legacy, and ongoing harms. Some important information for your consideration: in B.C., Indigenous peoples are overrepresented in prison and in homeless counts, despite making up a very small portion of the population ([BC Corrections and Indigenous Justice, 2023 Greater Victoria Point-in-Time Homeless Count and Housing Needs Survey p5](#)).

I've taken note of the draft summary budget featuring Truth and Reconciliation as the first subject, like it is the number one priority, but the amount offered simply doesn't reflect priority. This is called performative solidarity, which means that no tangible action is being made to actually be in solidarity and shape change for the better. \$200,000 in a city budget is quite small, **this is half of how much is being offered to the VPD each year to upgrade furniture**, despite the VPD only reporting spending about \$3000 on this in 2023. I think the City of Victoria can do better than this if they are truly dedicated to Truth and Reconciliation.

I would also like to share that **I am completely opposed to bylaw services and any**

increases to their operations. The way they treat people is very violent and inhumane. I live near an encampment and sometimes I can hear bylaw coming and stealing my neighbours belongings. I have heard people sobbing and explaining to the bylaw officers that it's next to impossible to get their things back, especially when food and medication is taken, and their things still get taken as they are crying and pleading! How can the City of Victoria condone treating our community members like this? I am aware of the councillors who oppose these actions and I am grateful for their advocacy, but it needs to be reflected amongst the whole council so that our less fortunate community members can be heard, respected, and supported.

I hope this sheds some light on how the 2025 Budget can be adjusted to better support our community and actually be in solidarity with Indigenous people.

Thank you for reading,

Personal Privacy

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Draft Budget Comments
Date: December 14, 2024 11:10:05 AM

Spending an additional \$81 million on the Victoria police is the wrong direction for those funds. Directing those towards mental health services or housing resources seems like a much better use of them. If not those then directing those funds to food banks would be great to help combat the effects of the recession.

On a personal note, as a cyclist in Victoria, after stories like this (<https://www.timescolonist.com/local-news/vicpd-officers-use-vehicles-as-form-of-force-against-pedestrians-and-cyclists-documents-say-9132034>) come out about Victoria police having a track record of running down cyclists, I don't feel rewarding that behaviour with additional funding is a good use of taxpayer dollars.

All the best,
Personal P (he/him)

Personal Privacy

From: Personal Pr
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025-2029 Draft Budget
Date: December 14, 2024 3:04:13 PM

Dear Council,

Myself and many members of my community in the city of Victoria strongly believe that the Vic PD budget should be decreased. There are many local services focused on addressing the root causes of social issues such as poverty, housing and addiction issues. As a city, we should be supporting these resources as much as possible to ensure a safer and more equitable future. Many challenges that the police purport to solve are more efficiently and effectively addressed from a community support angle. There is a wealth of sociological evidence to back this up.

Please consider prioritizing environmental and social support sectors over the police in this upcoming budget.

Sincerely,
Personal Privacy

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Fwd: Input on Victoria's Draft Budget 2025
Date: December 14, 2024 10:42:39 AM

Hello,

My name is ^{Personal Privacy} I live at **Personal Privacy**. I'm writing today to share my thoughts on Victoria's Draft Budget for 2025. My partner sent in this email and I wanted to echo her thoughts.

I am very disturbed by the proposed increases to the Victoria Police Department in general, but specifically in contrast to how little the annual Reconciliation Grant is.

The RCMP was created to discriminate, oppress, and eliminate Indigenous peoples across the country so that First Nations could lose autonomy, their land stolen and repopulated by settler colonial immigrants and abused for resource extraction. Further, their languages, cultures, and children were stolen from them through horrifically violent methods.

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The Victoria Police Department, although separate from RCMP operations, is intertwined with the RCMP's history, legacy, and ongoing harms. Some important information for your consideration: in B.C., Indigenous peoples are overrepresented in prison and in homeless counts, despite making up a very small portion of the population ([BC Corrections and Indigenous Justice, 2023 Greater Victoria Point-in-Time Homeless Count and Housing Needs Survey p5](#)).

I've taken note of the draft summary budget featuring Truth and Reconciliation as the first subject, like it is the number one priority, but the amount offered simply doesn't reflect priority. This is called performative solidarity, which means that no tangible action is being made to actually be in solidarity and shape change for the better. \$200,000 in a city budget is quite small, **this is half of how much is being offered to the VPD each year to upgrade furniture**, despite the VPD only reporting spending about \$3000 on this in 2023. I think the City of Victoria can do better than this if they are truly dedicated to Truth and Reconciliation.

I would also like to share that **I am completely opposed to bylaw services and any**

increases to their operations. The way they treat people is very violent and inhumane. I live near an encampment and sometimes I can hear bylaw coming and stealing my neighbours belongings. I have heard people sobbing and explaining to the bylaw officers that it's next to impossible to get their things back, especially when food and medication is taken, and their things still get taken as they are crying and pleading! How can the City of Victoria condone treating our community members like this? I am aware of the councillors who oppose these actions and I am grateful for their advocacy, but it needs to be reflected amongst the whole council so that our less fortunate community members can be heard, respected, and supported.

I hope this sheds some light on how the 2025 Budget can be adjusted to better support our community and actually be in solidarity with Indigenous people.

Thank you for reading,

Personal Privacy

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Cc: [Victoria Mayor and Council](#)
Subject: Retail flight in downtown core
Date: December 14, 2024 11:29:27 AM

As a small business owner I am quite concerned about the proposed increasing property taxes.

Retail in particular is struggling (vacancies rising, lease rates dropping, realtors and engineers involved with permitting are both seeing a significant drop in interest from tenants looking for downtown retail; I'm told the only main applicants right now are those looking for small fast food venues) and property taxes have gone up considerably in the last few years, adding to the pain.

In 2021 I paid ~\$25,000 property tax on the property I am in, in 2024 it was ~\$37000 — that is about a 50% increase in 4 years which is not sustainable (add to this my sales in this period have declined). With increasing pressure from online retail it will particularly drive downtown retailers out of the downtown core.

City council should be doing all it can to support small businesses in the downtown core as they are the engine of downtown vibrancy and they face much headwind even without rising taxes.

[Personal Privacy](#)

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: A resounding NO to an increased Police budget
Date: December 15, 2024 4:39:10 PM

Hello,

I am writing in response to the call for Public Input regarding the proposed 2025-2029 Draft financial plan.

There are various areas I am concerned about in these proposed budgets, namely the massive increase in the policing budget, and the ignorant use of eco-friendly policy to justify spending tax dollars on corporate investments and neighbourhood improvements that disproportionately improve the lives of wealthy residents and cost those of us struggling to find affordable housing, fresh food and fair wages. this proposal would have Victorians working poor and unhoused populations lose community centres, public libraries that are open 7 days a week, fresh and accessible food, access to public parks and play spaces, and affordable housing. The city or Victoria (and Esquimalt) does not need more police, we do not need militarized surveillance or more efficient displacement methods. We need REAL, AFFORDABLE HOUSING. We need affordable food. We need access to education.

Below I have flagged a few areas of concern and added notes. Thank you for taking into account the needs and opinions of ALL Victoria Residents, not just those of us who can afford to own a home.

Updating vehicles and switching to "low-carbon-fleet"

City vehicles should be used until they are more expensive to use than to replace. Driving demand for inhumanely harvested precious metals from Congo is an irresponsible use of public funds. Seeing brand new electric vehicles in the hands of Saanich Police and City works while they violently displace unhoused people who cannot access reliable food, or shelter is a gross display of misappropriated finances.

"Zero Waste Streets"

VicPD steals and disposes of a remarkable number of tents, trolleys, wagons, tarps and other valuable private property on a WEEKLY basis in the ongoing campaign to further dehumanize, demoralize and arguably murder unhoused people who are repeatedly turned out into the streets with nothing but the few items they can carry. A good policy for reducing that immense amount of man-made garbage would be to decrease the amount of funding going to displacement initiatives and divert that to funding supportive housing initiatives, food support systems, and community care services like access to medical care and safe-supply.

Short Term Rentals

It seems the new budget would signal an end to enforcing or maintaining short term rental regulations imposed to support renters in finding fair, affordable housing, and limiting landlords from turning a profit on vacation rentals. If this will end, how does the City plan to continue supporting long-term renters and prevent a widening wealth gap between Landlords and renters? We need ACTUALLY affordable housing. (1800 for a one bedroom is not affordable when minimum wage is \$17.40 and living wage is \$26.78)

10% police budget increase

A nearly 10% increase in a police budget is a clear sign that this city has not heard or does not care to hear its people. We didn't ask for police to attend our protests, DO NOT increase the budget so they can walk next to us, protect violent counter-protestors and reroute traffic. We can do that ourselves. We don't need police working overtime to harass people sheltering outdoors. DO NOT increase the budget to pay cops to look in tents at midnight.

We need this city to invest in community safety initiatives that allow for human dignity and self-determination. Fund shelters and safe supply if you want to address homelessness. Keep libraries open so people can keep warm and dry. Pay for more street team nurses, support workers to be available to folks in need. We don't need cops with guns checking in, we need caring support networks, adequately funded and resourced.

I hope the city will take these concerns into account.

Personal Privacy (she/they)

Personal Privacy

Acknowledging that the land on which I live is the unceded territory of the WSÁNEĆ and Lekwungen-speaking peoples.

Territorial acknowledgements are a near insignificant step towards dismantling colonial systems of oppression. I encourage us all to take a moment to think of other, more active ways to enact decolonization, connect with the land, and honour the Indigenous Peoples who continue to steward this land.

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Cc: [Marianne Alto \(Mayor\)](#); [Jeremy Caradonna \(Councillor\)](#); [Chris Coleman \(Councillor\)](#); [Matt Dell \(Councillor\)](#); [Marg Gardiner \(Councillor\)](#); [Stephen Hammond \(Councillor\)](#); [Susan Kim \(Councillor\)](#); [Krista Loughton \(Councillor\)](#); [Dave Thompson \(Councillor\)](#)
Subject: 2025 Draft Budget feedback – Police and housing
Date: December 15, 2024 9:56:02 AM

Hello,

I am writing to provide feedback on the city's 2025 draft budget, and specifically to oppose VicPD's draft budget and recommend the city spend on housing or income subsidies.

VicPD

It is unacceptable that VicPD stands poised to have received a 39.3% budget increase in five years, if the city grants its 2025 requests and the police board is successful in its outstanding appeal. The department is already overfunded, as I illustrate below. I've also provided suggestions for some items to reject from the draft VicPD budget, as well as notes about some of the harms perpetrated by VicPD.

- Statistics Canada:
 - The “rate of police strength” in Canada is 178 police per 100,000 people. VicPD's rate of police strength is 221 per 100,000.
 - For police forces serving more than 50,000 people in Canada, only Montreal has both more police and a higher authorized strength per capita.
 - Despite VicPD's claims, these figures cannot be solely attributed to VicPD being a “downtown” police force. Other downtown police forces in the country (e.g., the Vancouver Police Department) function with fewer officers per capita than VicPD.
- [Recent Canadian research](#) found there are “no consistent correlations between police spending and municipal crime rates.” Providing VicPD with more officers and funding will not affect crime rates or perceptions of community safety.
- The police board's claim that everything in its draft budget is essential is false. You can surely find other examples, but on my brief review, VicPD proposes spending:
 - \$760,000 on its public relations team.
 - \$140,000 for advertising.
 - \$101,000 for a position related to uniform and equipment distribution.
 - \$327,000 a year on new community resource officers, which the budget describes as being used to police poverty and conduct more CPTED reviews, which recommend hostile architecture.
 - \$147,000 for a position policing protests, which are already heavily policed.
 - \$30,000 in drone training to surveil protests.
 - \$203,000 for the police board, a \$100,000 increase over two years.

- \$70,000 in new relocation assistance for recruitment. Victoria is already a desirable place to live for constables who made an average of \$129,000 last year, and sergeants who made an average of \$159,000 (more than a Minister of State).
- VicPD perpetuates harms against Victoria residents. Every dollar sent to VicPD will further those harms. For example:
 - According to their own use of force reports, VicPD injures someone every 2.5 days.
 - VicPD injures one person in crisis a week.
 - VicPD has also killed several people who were in crisis.
 - Despite their internal policies, VicPD continues to use police cars to hit people on foot and on bikes who pose no active threat.

Alternatives to police response are possible, but they involve removing police from the equation, not further entrenching police in mental health through things like Co-Response Teams. VicPD has a vested interest in asserting that nobody but police can deescalate situations, but it is not true. If you continue to accept the claim that police should have a place in mental health response, VicPD will continue to meet people in crisis with violence.

Funding housing and income subsidies

I would encourage Victoria council to reject all of VicPD's proposed spending increases and to cut into VicPD's existing budget to direct those funds elsewhere. Sending millions of dollars to VicPD, who dedicate significant time and resources to police people who are unhoused, is illogical when you could use city funds to actually keep people safe.

The draft budget is deeply unserious on housing. It appears to focus on policy changes, dedicates only \$466,000 to the Victoria Housing Reserve fund, makes passing references to the Burnside and Caledonia affordable housing projects, and relies on senior government support for future projects. We are far past the time where municipalities can wring their hands about senior governments "passing the buck" to municipalities on housing and services. The buck has been passed, and you have the resources to house people, by building housing or providing income subsidies.

The recent consideration to possibly spend \$4.7 million to further displace people makes no sense, for example, when concerns about "safety" can in large part be boiled down to discomfort with viewing visible poverty. The city should consider dedicating that \$4.7 million (either as new funding, or through a reduction in police and bylaw spending) to provide \$1,600 a month to people who are unsheltered in the city according to the 2023 point in time count.

This work could potentially be done with an [agreement with the province](#) to let recipients

remain eligible for social assistance. Studies suggest such a program would have positive outcomes and achieve the results you are actually looking to achieve.

Conclusion

If you continue to spend on police and bylaw and rely on zoning changes and senior governments to provide housing, you will never eliminate visible poverty and homelessness. The fences that line Pandora, and the people who still have no choice but to shelter behind them, show your current approach does not work.

Police don't keep people safe, but you can. You can use the resources at your disposal within VicPD's existing \$72 million, and the additional \$9 million VicPD otherwise want Victoria and Esquimalt to spend, to build housing or directly provide money to people who can then afford to house themselves. When there are fewer visibly poor people to police, you will find people will stop clamouring for more police.

Sincerely,

Personal Privacy

Victoria, B.C.

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Feedback on the 2025 Draft Budget - Bronwyn Guiton
Date: December 16, 2024 11:47:39 AM

Dear City budget team,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the 2025 budget for the City.

I live in the North Park neighbourhood, and have lived and worked here in the heart of the City since ^{Personal Privacy}. In North Park and Downtown I feel inundated by people who are intoxicated by drugs, who are trespassing, leaving garbage and excrement, and tenting. Discussing this with other parents at Crystal Pool while our kids go to swimming lessons, the word "inundated" is one that comes up again and again as we compare our experiences over the past few years and lament that the situation is worsening, rather than getting better. In the past I've had a lot of compassion for community members who are unhoused and addicted to drugs. I appreciate the complex nature of addiction and the need for compassionate approaches. North Park has hosted so many new housing and harm reduction projects in the past 5 years and I have previously been a supporter of these on principle. However, the sheer concentration of these projects and services here has now had a significant negative impact, and as a result my patience and support for it all has dropped to zero. The balance in our city has shifted too far in the direction of accommodating those struggling with addiction, and needs to now refocus on ensuring a safe, pleasant, clean, and liveable city.

My priorities for the 2025 City budget are:

- support for measures that prohibit drug use,
- stepping-up proactive, visible neighbourhood police patrols and bylaw enforcement,
- increased street and sidewalk cleaning, and refuse collection,
- halting the concentration of new social services and housing projects in the same neighborhoods again and again,
- investing in pleasant, modern, family-oriented public amenities and services in neighbourhoods that have been bearing the brunt of the City's new housing projects and harm reduction services, and,
- investing in up-stream drugs and alcohol prevention for youth through attractive, modern, safe, and healthy public gathering destinations and recreational opportunities that offer an inviting alternative to boredom and drugs and alcohol.

Thank you for taking the time to read my feedback on the 2025 budget for the City.

Sincerely,

Personal Privacy

Victoria, BC ^{Personal Privacy}
Personal Privacy

From: [Public Hearings](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: FW: Property Tax Review
Date: December 16, 2024 8:36:11 AM

From: **Personal Privacy**

Sent: December 13, 2024 8:32 PM

To: **Personal Privacy**

Public Hearings <PublicHearings@victoria.ca>

Subject: RE: Property Tax Review

Thanks ^{Personal Privacy} – Yup, so many ways to cut expenses / raise revenue and get back to a gov that looks after the basics, not cradle to grave social programmes and handouts to every special interest group. Same at all 3 levels of our current socialist woke regime in Canada.

Hopefully Trump can turn the idiocy around and demonstrate what can be done.....despite the Dems already trying to sabotage his efforts before he even starts. Then maybe Canadians will wake up.

Personal P

From: **Personal Privacy**

Sent: December 13, 2024 7:38 PM

To: publichearings@victoria.ca

Subject: Property Tax Review

It's refreshing to see the Mayor and Council taking action to instruct staff to explore ways of trimming the budget and keeping property tax increases in check. This is long overdue—property owners, whether residential, commercial, or industrial, simply cannot bear tax hikes year after year that outpace inflation. What's even more concerning is the risk of taxes surpassing the 3% rent increase cap for residential tenancies in 2025. To add insult to injury, introducing higher fees (such as sewer and stormwater charges) in place of property tax increases is both unfair and misleading.

It's time for Mayor and Council, along with staff, to think beyond the usual budget cuts. They must seek not only cost savings but also innovative ways to boost the city's revenue *without* relying on property taxes. The challenge is clear: what creative revenue streams can we tap into? Ideas like corporate naming rights for buildings and parks, advertising at playgrounds and sports fields, or even a \$10 disembarkation fee for the nearly one million cruise ship passengers who visit Victoria each year—this could generate up to \$9.5 million annually, potentially earmarked for police and bylaw enforcement.

The possibilities are endless, yet staff and Council seem to be overlooking many of them. For instance, why aren't we leveraging our world-renowned location to attract more events and the movie industry, without offering tax breaks in exchange? Rather than allowing these industries to reap the benefits of working in Victoria, why aren't they contributing a percentage of their earnings to help sustain our city's infrastructure?

It's time to think bigger. Victoria deserves leadership that sees beyond the status quo and taps into new, creative sources of revenue that reflect our city's unique position as one of the most

desirable places on the planet.

Personal Privacy Victoria BC



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From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#); [Marianne Alto \(Mayor\)](#); [Jeremy Caradonna \(Councillor\)](#); [Chris Coleman \(Councillor\)](#); [Matt Dell \(Councillor\)](#); [Marg Gardiner \(Councillor\)](#); [Stephen Hammond \(Councillor\)](#); [Susan Kim \(Councillor\)](#); [Krista Loughton \(Councillor\)](#); [Dave Thompson \(Councillor\)](#)
Subject: Budget 2025
Date: December 17, 2024 3:29:59 PM

The City of Victoria's proposed property tax increase is obscene and unconscionable.

Numerous studies have shown that Victoria is one of the most unaffordable cities in Canada. Victoria has one of the highest crime severity rates in BC and a rate that is more than double the national average. The City is a financial and socio-economic mess. Years of a lack of financial controls, poor decision making, program creep, inadequate resource management and social policy experimentation instead of prudent governance has led to this crisis.

Newly re-elected Premier Eby stated that *"inflation and interest rates have driven up the cost of daily essentials"* and is providing households a \$1,000 grocery rebate.

Eby following the December 16 Premiers meeting identified *"the very pressing and urgent threat to people about their jobs and ability to pay their bills"*. The generally well respected former Federal Finance Minister in her resignation letter wrote *"Our country today faces a grave challenge. The incoming administration in the United States is pursuing a policy of aggressive economic nationalism, including a threat of 25 per cent tariffs. We need to take that threat extremely seriously. That means keeping our fiscal powder dry today, so we have the reserves we may need for a coming tariff war. That means eschewing costly political gimmicks, which we can ill afford"*

It appears that Victoria Council believes otherwise and wants continue to impose massive tax increases that far exceed inflation.

Property taxes increased by 6.15% in 2023, 7.93% in 2024 and now 12.7% in 2025; the highest in living memory (Councillor Jeremy Caradonna report to the JBNA November meeting). This is a compound 29% increase in 3 years. Add in another 7.5% for the Crystal Pool replacement and taxes will have gone up by 38%. This will take every single cent and more that Premier Eby believes residents need to keep food on the table and a roof over our heads. It will drain the capacity of individuals and families to deal with the economic turmoil identified by the Provincial and Federal Governments.

Property taxes not only affect the standard of living for owners and the disposable income they have to support local businesses, arts and cultural enterprises but directly impact renters as the landlord has to recover the cost from somewhere or find the money by stopping doing necessary property repairs and maintenance.

After the Provincial election, Premier Eby acknowledged that voters sent a strong message that their government has to focus on affordability, health, and public safety and security; and not ideology. Mayor Alto and Council need to heed that message.

The Mayor and Council also need to learn the lessons from the Vancouver Art Gallery fiasco and the

hastily cancelled redevelopment of the Royal BC Museum - the public purse cannot afford vanity projects and costly virtue signalling.

The trust in all levels of government is at all time lows, in large part due to their adherence to dogma and an inability to listen. Just look at what's happened with Victoria School District. Does Victoria Council believe they are just as entitled?

Economic Reality

Alto and Council has to accept that governments do not create wealth, they spend it.

Wealth is created by industry and commerce. Victoria is a working port. We have ship building, marine services, Canadian naval and coast guard facilities, commercial fishing and fish plants, international ferries, an international float plane terminal, dockyards, a major cruise ship industry, a highly successful whale watching industry, marinas and much more. We have world renowned tourist attractions and destinations, and the tourism infrastructure of hotels and service providers to support them. Not to mention the small and medium enterprises run by numerous entrepreneurs in the downtown/harbour area. This should be an excellent foundation for a strong and vibrant economy that supports the municipal tax base.

Victoria City Council seems intent on destroying all this.

Ports by their very definition move goods and people between the ocean and land. Hotels, stores and businesses need the delivery of supplies and equipment; trades/service providers need to get to their customers. Residents need to get to their place of work, appointments, shops and entertainment. Tourists need to travel to and from their accommodation and the attractions they have come to experience. Yet there is no direct transit from the airport to downtown and Council is determined to strangle the movement of all commercial and private vehicles through downtown.

Add to this anti-trade ideology, the ongoing disregard for public safety and security that is creating a ghetto downtown where shop owners, employees and customers no longer want to go. The weekend of December 14/15 was probably the busiest shopping days of the year. Mayfair and Hillside Malls were thronging with shoppers but the Bay Centre was a relative ghost town. The main downtown shopping streets were devoid of people except those openly using illicit drugs or panhandlers, and are lined with closed stores, boarded up windows and smashed bus stops with trash, vomit and other substances on the sidewalks.

This socio-economic decline will continue until Alto and Council gets back to fundamentals and concentrate on making Victoria safe and attractive to business, commerce, tourists and residents. It has to focus on needs not wants.

Given the massive deficits and debts at the Provincial and Federal level, municipalities cannot rely on senior levels of government bailing them out.

Financial Management

Council has to examine every program and question if the program is the City's responsibility. If it is

not, why are they funding it? For those programs that are within remit, what are the program's expected outcomes and are these outcomes being achieved. If not, why not? If there are no quantifiable, measurable outcomes then what does that say about the integrity of the administration, Council's due diligence and the value of the program.

Caradonna admitted at the JBNA November meeting that *"exact percentage of the capital budget spend on bike lanes was not readily available"* but that it was *"a very small percentage compared to the overall cost of maintaining roads"*.

It is astounding that Council does not understand its budget and that they cannot explain it to residents. Caradonna's comments also demonstrate a fundamental lack of understanding of financial principles. Capital expenditures are accounted differently than operating and maintenance costs (Public Sector GAAP).

Asset management fundamentals are to prioritize the repair and maintenance of existing critical infrastructure, then the repair and maintenance of non-critical infrastructure including decommissioning if no longer needed, and only do capital improvements when those maintenance needs are met and if the capital improvements have a positive benefit-cost. Caradonna's comments are akin to running a household budget and buying a new couch without knowing how much it cost or where the money is coming from to pay for it but defending the decision by claiming the couch cost a lot less than fixing the roof!

Safe Streets

Victoria Council is not social services organization. That is the responsibility of the Province. If drug abuse is a health issue, hold the Province accountable while making our streets safe through supporting our police and enforcing our bylaws.

Housing

How long does it take to get any housing built in this city? Does Council know the minimum, maximum and average time it takes from initially submitting a development application to starting construction and to occupancy? They should, and should be working diligently to reduce it.

"Proposed Redevelopment" signs sit outside boarded up, derelict, graffitied homes for years. Simplify the rules, minimize surcharges, eliminate roadblocks and homebuilders will build the homes that individuals, couples, families, seniors want to live in at price they can afford. Sites sitting empty for years and tortuous processes just drives up costs.

Enforce the rules. Instead of imposing long lists of conditions on a development (e.g. 50 Government Street) reject it. Developers will quickly learn to comply first time which will speed up the build, reduce expensive reworking of proposals and minimize staff time. Stop adding charges (aka taxes) that drive up the cost of private housing. Recognize that families need family homes with outdoor space to play. High rise apartments are a failed social experiment from the 1960s.

For those who are excluded from this dynamic then social housing is a necessity. Housing is the constitutional responsibility of the Province. If Council wants social housing, don't expect the private

sector to build and run it.

Construction Costs

Where are all the skilled trades, workers and materials coming from to build this housing, required infrastructure and roadway “improvements”? A shortage of any of these will directly drive up costs and cause delays. When was the last time Council engaged in a meaningful conversation with the building and construction industry on capacity? What will be the impact of US tariffs on construction costs?

Council needs to demonstrate it accounts for the ongoing operating and maintenance costs for the capital works. Where is the money and resources coming from for these life-cycle costs and what are the long-term budget implications? The City needs to be conducting life cycle analysis on all capital works and factoring them into every decision. The analysis needs to be transparent to Council and all residents.

Business Case Analysis

Council needs to put all capital projects on hold, including their political gimmicks and vanity projects such as buying abandoned restaurants or failed nightclubs, road “improvements” and centennial square splash park until they have viable, defensible, published business cases for each proposed project using quantifiable, rigorous data to show the effectiveness and value of the works.

For example, does erecting 40 or 30km/hr speed signs actually make any difference? What was the average speed on the residential streets before and after the posted speed was changed? What was the actual number of vehicle/pedestrian and vehicle/cycle injury collisions on those streets in the year before and after the changes? What was the actual number of pedestrian and cyclist fatalities before and after? If the actual speed was already 30-35 km/hr or if there is no statistically significant change in injuries or deaths then what is the point on spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on signs? The city cannot afford virtue signalling.

Strategic Actions

Planning concepts taught at University may be good for new subdivisions or new towns but Victoria is a built environment. The streets, utility locations and land use are established. Practical solutions to issues require holistic approaches and critical thinking with trade-offs and compromises.

Stop wasting money on chasing the next “great idea” such as new parkades and turning the TransCanada highway into a bus parking lot. The existing transit turn around at Government Street functions well with the occasional inconvenience when the street is closed on a summer weekend for an event. If BC Transit is so entitled that it insists that the existing arrangement is unacceptable then Humboldt and Burdett between Douglas and Blanshard are under-utilized right of ways ideal for parking buses and form a turn-around that does not require ripping out an intersection that was rebuilt within the last 5 years and installing yet more traffic lights, and keeps one of only two arterial roads through downtown open.

Complete existing promises such as the Government Street refresh, Peter Pollen Park and Broad Street South before starting new initiatives.

Alternative Project Delivery

The Victoria Downtown Y is welcoming Crystal Pool members during the Pool's extended closure. The Y is itself an aging facility.

The capital cost of the proposed new Crystal pool is over \$200 million, add in the inevitable re-designs, cost increases and construction delays and it will cost over a quarter of a billion dollars for just the capital build. The annual operating deficit will be over \$3 million or another \$100+ million over 35 years. A city of less than 100,000 cannot afford a quarter billion dollar vanity project.

This begs the question why the City of Victoria is not pursuing a partnership with the Y, other not-for-profit organizations, corporate donors and philanthropists to build a new recreational facility for all Victoria residents instead of wasting tax payers money on "information" booths in malls and a referendum.

Mayor Alto claims she believes in collaboration and partnerships. It's time for Alto and the rest of Council to "walk the talk"; roll up their sleeves, cancel the referendum and do the hard work required to find affordable, prudent and reasonable solutions for the Crystal Pool and the other significant urban renewal needed in downtown Victoria.

Resource Management

How many Full Time Equivalent (FTEs) employees work for the City, how many temporary and contract employees are there, how many employees are excluded from the FTE count by being charged to projects?

What is the total number of people working for the city, how much does it cost and how much of the city's budget is spend on wages, salaries and benefits? How much is paid to consultants and independent contractors?

Are the administration procedures and processes efficient and effective? Are they empowering employees and increasing job satisfaction by minimizing rework and other unproductive activities. Is the information and communications technology current and being fully utilized? When was the last time a comprehensive review undertaken? How can the administration do things better, quicker, more accurately and cheaper. Team focussed methodologies such as LEAN Six Sigma (see Pike Place Fish Market, Seattle) is a good place to start.

If Council does not know these answers it is failing in its fiduciary duties.

Inadequate bureaucracy

Alto and Council need objective, succinct information. It's a well known fact that you have 45 seconds or 3/4 of a page to get the attention of an executive (the 'elevator pitch'); "executive summaries" longer than a page/page and a half are worthless and the staff member who approves it is not performing.

For example, the executive summary report to the Committee of the Whole by the Director,

Sustainable Planning & Community Development and the Director, Engineering & Public Works on the Government Street Refresh Vision and Design Concept on June 24, 2022 was 18 pages and the actual vision was an attachment.

No elected official can be expected to read and process that amount of bureaucratic jargon (bafflegab). Consequently, no work has been done on implementing this vision. Government Street remains a 50yr. old tired street in desperate need of modernization.

Victoria City staff and senior management are not serving Council or the City's residents.

Democratic Deficit

Voter turnout dropped from 44.9% in 2018 to 38% in 2022. Due to the lack of a ward system approximately 12,000 individuals representing 44% of those voting and only 16% of eligible voters elected a cabal of 5 councillors. Until the Province or a mayor has the courage to introduce a ward system or an amalgamated Regional Municipality, Victoria will be faced with a disenfranchised electorate who do not trust the council to act in the best interests of the city and believe they only pursue personal agendas.

Conclusion

Property tax increases of 12.7% or 7% will only exacerbate the dire problems of affordability and socio-economic malaise in Victoria.

Tax increases need to be kept at BC's inflation rate of 2.3%.

Mayor and Council needs to exhibit sound financial management; delivering services and programs that are within their mandate and which prioritize the creation of an affordable, safe and secure city with a flourishing economy.

Mayor and Council need to stop profligate, ad-hoc spending and concentrate on the prudent management of its resources to deliver well managed, evidence based programs and projects that have measurable outcomes aligned with strategic goals.

This will mean reassessing all services, programs, operations and capital spend, and making hard decisions on only budgeting those that are effective and needed. Wants and wish lists have to be set aside.

Mayor and Council need step up and demonstrate to sceptical residents and business owners that they will make tough, informed decisions to get the city's fiscal house in order and address it's socio-economic problems.

Personal Privacy

Personal Privacy Victoria

Personal Privacy

Personal Privacy

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Cc: [Victoria Mayor and Council](#)
Subject: "Having my say" on proposed budget
Date: December 17, 2024 1:53:40 PM

Dear Mayor & Council,

GAAAAAHHHHHHH!!! I just looked at the draft budget summary proposed for 2025 and I see that you are contemplating throwing a whopping \$68.3 million at the police. Really???? How much actual housing, shelter, social support, and care in our community would that massive sum cover? We don't need more cops - we need more care! C'mon now. You folks are one of the most progressive councils in the country and you, of all people, should understand the basic concept that crimes go down when social services go up. Certainly, there must be more effective ways to reduce crime than funding a system that is designed to punish our community's most at-risk citizens (I know, cops do more than just harass unhoused folk). As far as I'm aware, the police budget has increased year after year, and yet so has crime. With this in mind, how can we possibly justify throwing even more money at this ineffective organization?

And just don't get me started on the proposed \$5.3 million for Bylaw. I know y'all think Bylaw are doing a fine job, etc, but if you ask anyone with lived experience of trying to exist unhoused or doing outreach, the story remains the same - Bylaw are paid to terrorize our most vulnerable neighbours.

I know you know that Victoria is not alone in facing a massive problem of homelessness, addiction, poverty, and all the crimes and chaos that come part and parcel with this aspect of societal collapse. I know it is an insidious, systemic problem that has infected every municipality, large or small, across the planet. Some municipalities have had success in taming this beast by investing heavily in housing and social services. This is where I want to see our funding directed, not increasing Chief Manak's budget. Victoria has been a leader in so many areas of progress (go, bike lanes!). Let's show the rest of Canada how we can care for our neighbours, housed and unhoused alike, by investing in systems of care and healing, not punishment and abuse.

Wishing you all a warm, happy, healthy holiday.

Personal Privacy

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Draft Budget 2025 Comments
Date: December 17, 2024 11:19:56 AM

I am writing with some concerns I have about the proposed property taxes and draft budget plan for 2025 for Victoria. Some of the increases below seem excessive in times where we are all struggling with increased costs for things.

City Manager's office - Why is City Manager's Office budget increasing by over \$500,000 from costs last year? If it is for a wage increase for the mayor and council, then that needs to be reduced. If not, the budget increase still seems too high.

Public Art Maintenance - Why are costs so high? \$150,000.00 to maintain art is extremely excessive. Suggest spending less in your "new creations" this year and make sure whatever is created in the future doesn't require so much maintenance! Also, the idea that "art" should be purchased to be shown in empty storefronts seems excessive. Why not provide a free area for people to display their art or purchase some "murals" and paper them onto the windows.

Cycling Network Improvements/Traffic Calming Initiatives - These budgets should be reduced.

Traffic calming is actually causing more stress and added congestion for traffic. Zero traffic accidents is an unobtainable goal due to human error. People are already getting seriously injured on your new bike lanes.

Current Roads - More money needs to be allocated to paint the lines on the current roads. Blacked out former lines and faded current lines make it a nightmare to drive (especially at night in the rain). The roads are in a bad state of disrepair. While spending all this money on bike lanes, the current road infrastructure is falling apart. How many bike lanes are needed? The numbers I see on the roads don't support the costs. There doesn't need to be a bike lane on every single road. Cutting back on making any new bike lanes for the coming year could fund repairing the existing roads for cars and buses.

The proposed increase of over 12% to property owners needs to be reviewed. What about getting some taxes (or paid licenses) from cyclists using the bike lanes? What about slowing down the construction of more new bike lanes and speed bumps/sidewalks jutting out into the road and using that money to improve our roads over the next year? Instead of developing so many high rises, more money should be put into place to help those that are on the streets and security. The high rises are not for those that are most vulnerable. Downtown is not a place I even want to visit anymore.

Everything can't be done at once. Council needs to prioritize things differently. Taxpayers are paying the price for "visions" that might not be theirs for our City.

I hope this letter will make a difference.

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: My Input for the Draft Budget 2025
Date: December 17, 2024 9:34:27 AM

Hello Legislative Services,

After reading the Proposed Draft Budget 2025 included in the recent online Capital Daily of Tuesday, December 17, 2024, I would like to see the following changes regarding:

1 - truly affordable housing for renters whose income is less than \$30,000 annually. That amount does not even begin to solve the housing crisis. In my apartment building 1 bedroom rentals begin at \$2400 monthly. That is unjustifiable for the majority of already-housed renters should a move become possible.

Please be realistic when mentioning special low-rental solutions for people earning 'incomes less than \$80,000. \$80,000 is NOT a low nor truthful affordable figure for currently unhoused and/ or students hunting for shelter.

2 - Rather than financial income increases in the salaries of Councillors and higher paid City Officials, take that increase and offer rehab and medical walk-in clinics to serve the destitute, the addicted, those people who need social rehab, mental health appointments , and staff emergency rooms with maximum 1 hour wait rather than the current 14 hour wait.

I love living in Victoria but there will soon be room for the aged, dying, and medically destitute only on the sidewalks. Visitors and residents will soon begin counting bodies tossed into bushes. The mounting disease from the discarded bodies will make the Health and Housing situations worse and worse, etc.

Thank you,
[Personal Privacy](#)

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Draft Budget Input
Date: December 17, 2024 6:47:55 PM

Hi folks,

I do have some strong feelings about how the city's property taxes have been used, and how money can be more efficiently directed to most effectively benefit the population.

I will just speak in general terms to keep things brief:

- Redirect as much money as possible towards policing services, i.e. eliminate needless frills such as poet laureates, pricey downtown branding signage, a pickleball hub etc...
- Scrap the Centennial Square revitalization plan immediately. The public isn't clamoring for this; quite the opposite.
- Put the brakes on the Yates to Pandora pedestrian-friendly project. Use that money instead to address the safety issues downtown first.
- Take a breather on implementation of legacy and vanity projects, and making decisions such as the purchase of the former Romeo's location for the purpose of creating another park. Consider putting that building back on the market and use the sale proceeds to fund projects that might have relied on the increased parking revenues that are stopping many people from coming downtown. And do not turn a blind eye to the concerns of citizens who don't use bicycles as their sole means of transportation.
- Some of those projects in the draft budget can wait, such as the installation of more recycling stations in place of waste bins, and sidewalk-widening improvements.
- If possible, push the Crystal Pool referendum question to when the next municipal election occurs. It can easily be an item on the ballot.

The bottom line: I urge you to focus on the priorities identified through public engagement. Listen to the people to avoid incurring further fury with a whopping tax increase.

[Personal Privacy](#)

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Budget
Date: December 18, 2024 6:54:00 AM

I work in an industry where demand has fallen off significantly, and it is impacting our ability to maintain our staff and offer them regular wage increases. Our solution is to tighten our belts and examine exactly what we were are paying for and eliminating anything that is unnecessary in the current economy. I get no sense from the draft budget I read for the city that there is any form of belt tightening going on. We all have different ideas about what we expect from our local government and my ideas currently relate to necessary services like roads and engineering projects and maintaining infrastructure rather than enhancing it. Parks and rec, including the crystal pool I classify as essential services. Almost \$10 million on Centennial Square is not necessary. And why does it cost almost \$15 million for planning? Most of what this department does is prohibit private enterprise from moving forward with projects that would improve our economy. That's my two cents.

[Personal Privacy](#)

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: feedback on property tax
Date: December 18, 2024 9:16:30 AM

Hello,

Having been born, raised, worked in Victoria for 72 years I have seen much changes. Recent changes have been enormous--good and bad, in my eyes. As a retired senior who has worked hard and saved judiciously to buy a home and provide continuing help to family members through ever increasing living expenses in Canada

I would express that keeping the property tax raise to minimum would be best. Its not like I can easily start a new career to augment my income.

The replacement of Crystal Pool could be partnered with the Y who is looking for a site to rebuild. I dont usually look at Langford as a recommendation but the way they have handled the building of the Library/Recreation Centre, etc. and recent purchase was a smart move.

Thanks for allowing for my feedback.

Yours truly, Personal Privacy

RE: 2025 Draft Budget

Advertising

Might I suggest you consider your advertising budget to save money?

The City spends far too much on print advertising.

The legislation regarding publishing Public Notices, etc was amended in 2022 to include reputable websites.

The Times Colonist print circulation is all over Vancouver Island. I would say a very small percentage of their subscribers are in the Victoria municipality.

Black Press, says it is a community paper, but is more of a flyer wrap than a news publication.

My recommendation is to advertise on timescolonist.com instead of the print product. There you can target the message to Victorian's by postal code. It is much less expensive and will reach the households you need with the required frequency and rules.

I believe a review of how the advertising revenue is being spent, you could see a considerable cost savings, in the thousands of dollars. A much more efficient, targeted and cost effective way to get your messages out.

Good Luck,

A friend of the City

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Draft Budget Input: Request for Increased Funding to Support Community Garden Programs
Date: December 18, 2024 5:41:14 PM

Dear City Council,

As a community food security, garden, and soil health advocate, dedicated to fostering inclusive, sustainable, and empowering spaces for community, I'm advocating for a significant increase in funding for the Growing in the City Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator Grant and to revise its Terms of Reference. Specifically, we are requesting:

1. Increase the funding cap per organization and allow applications on a per-garden basis.
2. Double the grants allocation from \$223,230 to \$446,460 for the 2025 City Budget.

The City of Victoria's Strategic Plan, under the "Economic Health and Community Vitality" section, prioritizes initiatives that: "expand supports for urban agriculture, gardening, and food security and food sovereignty initiatives." Strengthening support for community gardens is a practical, cost-effective way to achieve this strategic goal.

Community Impact of Community Gardens

Research consistently demonstrates that well-supported community gardens have a profound positive impact on urban communities, enhancing mental health, fostering social cohesion, and even reducing crime rates ([source](#)). Community gardens reduce social isolation by bringing people together from diverse backgrounds to form supportive networks where they can contribute to their communities. These gardens also serve as empowering gathering spaces for marginalized groups, such as the VIRCS Welcome Gardens, which provides newcomers and refugees a space for social connection, education, and access to culturally relevant foods.

Community gardens play a critical role in addressing rising food insecurity in Victoria. They offer access to fresh, local produce, and culturally relevant foods not readily available in grocery stores. These gardens empower people to take control of their food systems, fostering self-reliance, resilience, and improved physical health.

The City has already recognized the positive impact of community gardens in our communities by providing the "Community Garden Start-Up Grant" which supports the establishment of new gardens, and the "Volunteer Coordinator Grant" to enable neighbourhood organizations to sustain and manage these projects with volunteer support.

Volunteer Coordinator Grant Shortfalls

The \$10,000 annual cap per organization provided by the Volunteer Coordinator grant has remained unchanged since 2020, despite a 17% rise in inflation and the rising costs of maintaining and expanding community garden programs. At the same time, demand for community gardens has surged since 2020. From 2019-2023 there has been:

- 60% increase in community gardens
- 12 new community gardens built on City land: 4 allotment gardens and 8 commons gardens.
- 9 new fruit trees planted in community orchards (6 in Oaklands at Oswald Community Garden; 3 in Fernwood at Alexander Park).
- Demand for community garden plots has increased enormously. For example, at Yates Street Community Garden, 40 people joined the waitlist in 2018, 71 in 2019 and 121 in 2021 - representing a 203% increase from 2018 to 2021.

Volunteer burnout remains a significant challenge, and coordinators are tasked with managing volunteer turnover, integrating equity and inclusion practices, and managing increasingly complex projects.

Under the current Terms of Reference, organizations managing multiple community gardens are limited to a maximum of \$10,000 annually, regardless of the number of gardens they oversee. This policy discourages organizations from coordinating multiple garden projects, which could otherwise benefit from shared resources and economies of scale.

While the current funding allocation represents a solid starting point, it falls short of what is needed to fully realize the potential of these initiatives. Increasing support for the Volunteer Coordinator Grant is essential to ensuring the sustainability and continued success of community garden programs across Victoria.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Community Gardens

At the November 18th, 2024, Community Garden Roundtable hosted by CRFAIR, gardeners discussed the importance of reducing barriers and increasing access for marginalized communities in our gardens, particularly for Indigenous, Black, and other people of colour (IBPOC). While the value of creating more inclusive gardens was widely recognized, a significant barrier to advancing this equity work is lack of capacity and funding available to community garden programs.

Community gardens have long served as spaces where people can connect, share knowledge, and feel a sense of belonging. However, to better reflect the diversity of our communities, additional funding is essential to support community-led equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) initiatives. Many gardens are already working to incorporate EDI frameworks, but meaningful progress requires dedicated resources, time, and training to have a lasting impact.

Unfortunately, limited funding and ongoing volunteer burnout make it challenging to carry out these initiatives effectively and sustainably. Increased funding per garden would enable coordinators to expand EDI initiatives, fostering gardens that are more inclusive, welcoming, and impactful for equity-deserving groups and the broader community.

Our Recommendations

1. Amend the Terms of Reference for the Volunteer Coordinator Grant

Increase the funding cap per organization, allow organizations managing multiple projects to apply for additional funding, and review the policy through an equity lens to make

recommendations for how to effectively allocate this funding into the future. The current \$10,000 cap per organization is outdated, failing to account for inflation and the growing demand for community garden programs, especially for organizations coordinating multiple garden projects. This limitation disincentivizes the coordination of multiple garden projects, which could otherwise share resources and operate more efficiently.

2. Double the Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator Grant Allocation

Increase the overall funding allocation for the Volunteer Coordinator Grant from \$223,230 to \$446,460. This would allow community gardens to scale up their programs by funding additional staff hours, offering more educational opportunities, and implementing much-needed EDI initiatives.

3. Redistribute Funds from the Victoria Police Department Budget

In the spirit of equity and reconciliation, and in acknowledgment of the historic([source](#)) and ongoing([source](#)) harm caused by policing to IBPOC communities, we urge the City Council to consider reallocating a small portion (0.33%) of the proposed 2025 police budget to community-based initiatives including the Community Gardens Volunteer Coordinator Grant. The proposed police budget accounts for 23% of the total City budget – 8% more than Parks & Recreation, Community Development, and the Public Library budgets combined. We are not advocating for cuts to other essential community services, but rather for a fairer redistribution of funding.

The growing body of research shows that increasing police funding does not directly correlate to reduced crime, whereas investing in community services, recreation, and social programs—including community gardens—has been shown to lower crime rates and support community well-being([source](#)). Investing in community gardens offers a proactive, sustainable strategy to build safer, healthier neighborhoods.

Implications of Not Addressing Shortfalls

If the key amendments to the Terms of Reference and the proposed budget allocation are not made, community garden programs risk becoming unsustainable, jeopardizing the many benefits they provide to Victoria’s residents. This also threatens the City’s investment in numerous gardens established through the “Community Garden Start-Up Grant.” Volunteer burnout will continue to rise, reducing the capacity to maintain gardens and engage with diverse community members. Those who rely on these spaces may lose access to vital opportunities for connection, cultural expression, and food security.

By failing to adequately invest in these programs, the City risks not only stalling progress on its strategic priorities related to urban agriculture and food sovereignty but also weakening a proven, community-driven response to pressing social and economic challenges.

Call to Action

We urge the City of Victoria to acknowledge the profound impact community gardens have on our city and the critical need for adequate support. By amending the Terms of Reference, doubling the Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator grant, and reallocating a portion of the police budget, the

City can ensure that these vital spaces continue to foster strong, resilient, and inclusive communities.

Thank you for considering this request. We look forward to working together to strengthen the future of community gardens in Victoria.

Sincerely,

Personal Privacy

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: City of Victoria draft budget
Date: December 18, 2024 5:42:08 PM

Good day Mayor Alto and all Council members

I have been listening to the current budget debate that is being played out in the media in Victoria. My family and I live downtown and from our home we witness what we believe is a great waste of taxpayers money every week.

What I am referring to is the weekly protest from the Palestinian group that is attempting to shed a spotlight on the plight of the Palestinian people that are being slaughtered in Gaza. It's not that I disagree with their cause, but I feel that a marching protest costs the city too much every week.

I agree with the right to free speech but could this not be accomplished by a stationary protest at the parliament grounds? We live on **Personal Privacy** and every week from my condo I hear their protest with their megaphone. We have been inconvenienced by the street being blocked off by the police. It's simply too much and has been going on for too long. What about the rights of the residents and businesses that are affected by this?

I don't have the particulars as to the cost but I'm guessing all the extra police on foot, motorcycles and vans adds up at four times per month. Our city simply can't afford this. Who is benefiting? I would like to see this money put to better use elsewhere.

Perhaps a bylaw that limits marching protests to once per calendar year per group would go a long way in stopping this waste of money. If a group wants to have a marching protest beyond their yearly allotment, maybe they should cover the security costs.

I am not the only person who feels this way. In our lives and in business we have to use common sense with respect to our money and I would like to see this applied here. It's just not good use of our limited resources.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter

Personal Privacy

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Draft Budget Input: Request for Increased Funding to Support Community Garden Programs
Date: December 18, 2024 8:25:48 PM

Dear City Council,

As community gardeners dedicated to fostering inclusive, sustainable, and empowering spaces for our community, we are advocating for a significant increase in funding for the Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator Grant and to revise its Terms of Reference. Specifically, we are requesting:

1. Increase the funding cap per organization and allow applications on a per-garden basis.
2. Double the grants allocation from \$223,230 to \$446,460 for the 2025 City Budget.

The City of Victoria’s Strategic Plan, under the “Economic Health and Community Vitality” section, prioritizes initiatives that: “expand supports for urban agriculture, gardening, and food security and food sovereignty initiatives.” Strengthening support for community gardens is a practical, cost-effective way to achieve this strategic goal.

Community Impact of Community Gardens

Research consistently demonstrates that well-supported community gardens have a profound positive impact on urban communities, enhancing mental health, fostering social cohesion, and even reducing crime rates ([source](#)). Community gardens reduce social isolation by bringing people together from diverse backgrounds to form supportive networks where they can contribute to their communities. These gardens also serve as empowering gathering spaces for marginalized groups, such as the VIRCS Welcome Gardens, which provides newcomers and refugees a space for social connection, education, and access to culturally relevant foods.

Community gardens play a critical role in addressing rising food insecurity in Victoria. They offer access to fresh, local produce, and culturally relevant foods not readily available in grocery stores. These gardens empower people to take control of their food systems, fostering self-reliance, resilience, and improved physical health.

The City has already recognized the positive impact of community gardens in our communities by providing the “Community Garden Start-Up Grant” which supports the establishment of new gardens, and the “Volunteer Coordinator Grant” to enable neighbourhood organizations to sustain and manage these projects with volunteer support.

Volunteer Coordinator Grant Shortfalls

The \$10,000 annual cap per organization provided by the Volunteer Coordinator grant has remained unchanged since 2020, despite a 17% rise in inflation and the rising costs of maintaining and expanding community garden programs. At the same time, demand for community gardens has surged since 2020. From 2019-2023 there has been:

- 60% increase in community gardens

- 12 new community gardens built on City land: 4 allotment gardens and 8 commons gardens.
- 9 new fruit trees planted in community orchards (6 in Oaklands at Oswald Community Garden; 3 in Fernwood at Alexander Park).
- Demand for community garden plots has increased enormously. For example, at Yates Street Community Garden, 40 people joined the waitlist in 2018, 71 in 2019 and 121 in 2021 - representing a 203% increase from 2018 to 2021.

Volunteer burnout remains a significant challenge, and coordinators are tasked with managing volunteer turnover, integrating equity and inclusion practices, and managing increasingly complex projects.

Under the current Terms of Reference, organizations managing multiple community gardens are limited to a maximum of \$10,000 annually, regardless of the number of gardens they oversee. This policy discourages organizations from coordinating multiple garden projects, which could otherwise benefit from shared resources and economies of scale.

While the current funding allocation represents a solid starting point, it falls short of what is needed to fully realize the potential of these initiatives. Increasing support for the Volunteer Coordinator Grant is essential to ensuring the sustainability and continued success of community garden programs across Victoria.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Community Gardens

At the November 18th, 2024, Community Garden Roundtable hosted by CRFAIR, gardeners discussed the importance of reducing barriers and increasing access for marginalized communities in our gardens, particularly for Indigenous, Black, and other people of colour (IBPOC). While the value of creating more inclusive gardens was widely recognized, a significant barrier to advancing this equity work is lack of capacity and funding available to community garden programs.

Community gardens have long served as spaces where people can connect, share knowledge, and feel a sense of belonging. However, to better reflect the diversity of our communities, additional funding is essential to support community-led equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) initiatives. Many gardens are already working to incorporate EDI frameworks, but meaningful progress requires dedicated resources, time, and training to have a lasting impact.

Unfortunately, limited funding and ongoing volunteer burnout make it challenging to carry out these initiatives effectively and sustainably. Increased funding per garden would enable coordinators to expand EDI initiatives, fostering gardens that are more inclusive, welcoming, and impactful for equity-deserving groups and the broader community.

Our Recommendations

1. Amend the Terms of Reference for the Volunteer Coordinator Grant

Increase the funding cap per organization, allow organizations managing multiple projects to apply for additional funding, and review the policy through an equity lens to make recommendations for how to effectively allocate this funding into the future. The current

\$10,000 cap per organization is outdated, failing to account for inflation and the growing demand for community garden programs, especially for organizations coordinating multiple garden projects. This limitation disincentivizes the coordination of multiple garden projects, which could otherwise share resources and operate more efficiently.

2. **Double the Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator Grant Allocation**

Increase the overall funding allocation for the Volunteer Coordinator Grant from \$223,230 to \$446,460. This would allow community gardens to scale up their programs by funding additional staff hours, offering more educational opportunities, and implementing much-needed EDI initiatives.

3. **Redistribute Funds from the Victoria Police Department Budget**

In the spirit of equity and reconciliation, and in acknowledgment of the historic([source](#)) and ongoing([source](#)) harm caused by policing to IBPOC communities, we urge the City Council to consider reallocating a small portion (0.33%) of the proposed 2025 police budget to community-based initiatives including the Community Gardens Volunteer Coordinator Grant. The proposed police budget accounts for 23% of the total City budget – 8% more than Parks & Recreation, Community Development, and the Public Library budgets combined. We are not advocating for cuts to other essential community services, but rather for a fairer redistribution of funding.

The growing body of research shows that increasing police funding does not directly correlate to reduced crime, whereas investing in community services, recreation, and social programs—including community gardens—has been shown to lower crime rates and support community well-being([source](#)). Investing in community gardens offers a proactive, sustainable strategy to build safer, healthier neighborhoods.

Implications of Not Addressing Shortfalls

If the key amendments to the Terms of Reference and the proposed budget allocation are not made, community garden programs risk becoming unsustainable, jeopardizing the many benefits they provide to Victoria’s residents. This also threatens the City’s investment in numerous gardens established through the “Community Garden Start-Up Grant.” Volunteer burnout will continue to rise, reducing the capacity to maintain gardens and engage with diverse community members. Those who rely on these spaces may lose access to vital opportunities for connection, cultural expression, and food security.

By failing to adequately invest in these programs, the City risks not only stalling progress on its strategic priorities related to urban agriculture and food sovereignty but also weakening a proven, community-driven response to pressing social and economic challenges.

Call to Action

We urge the City of Victoria to acknowledge the profound impact community gardens have on our city and the critical need for adequate support. By amending the Terms of Reference, doubling the Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator grant, and reallocating a portion of the police budget, the City can ensure that these vital spaces continue to foster strong, resilient, and inclusive

communities.

Thank you for considering this request. We look forward to working together to strengthen the future of community gardens in Victoria.

Sincerely,

Personal Privacy

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Police budget
Date: December 19, 2024 10:00:08 AM

Hello!

I am a Victoria city resident and I am aware that 23% of the city budget will be going to police services. I do not support this and strongly want it to be reconsidered. There are many other services that could greatly benefit from these funds. Please reduce their budget for 2025.

Thank you ,
Personal Priva

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Draft Budget Input: Request for Increased Funding to Support Community Garden Programs
Date: December 19, 2024 9:09:41 AM

Dear City Council,

As community garden coordinator dedicated to fostering inclusive, sustainable, and empowering spaces for our community, I am advocating for a significant increase in funding for the Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator Grant and to revise its Terms of Reference. Specifically, I am requesting:

1. Increase the funding cap per organization and allow applications on a per-garden basis.
2. Double the grants allocation from \$223,230 to \$446,460 for the 2025 City Budget.

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The City has already recognized the positive impact of community gardens in our communities by providing the “Community Garden Start-Up Grant” which supports the establishment of new gardens, and the “Volunteer Coordinator Grant” to enable neighbourhood organizations to sustain and manage these projects with volunteer support.

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Unfortunately, limited funding and ongoing volunteer burnout make it challenging to carry out these initiatives effectively and sustainably. Increased funding per garden would enable coordinators to expand EDI initiatives, fostering gardens that are more inclusive, welcoming, and impactful for equity-deserving groups and the broader community.

My Recommendations

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Implications of Not Addressing Shortfalls

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By failing to adequately invest in these programs, the City risks not only stalling progress on its strategic priorities related to urban agriculture and food sovereignty but also weakening a proven, community-driven response to pressing social and economic challenges.

Call to Action

I urge the City of Victoria to acknowledge the profound impact community gardens have on our city and the critical need for adequate support. By amending the Terms of Reference, doubling the Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator grant, and reallocating a portion of the police budget, the

City can ensure that these vital spaces continue to foster strong, resilient, and inclusive communities.

Thank you for considering this request. I look forward to working together to strengthen the future of community gardens in Victoria.

Sincerely,

Personal Privacy

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: FWD: Fwd: A resounding NO to an increased Police budget
Date: December 19, 2024 11:43:25 AM

Hello,

I am writing in response to the call for Public Input regarding the proposed 2025-2029 Draft financial plan.

There are various areas I am concerned about in these proposed budgets, namely the massive increase in the policing budget, and the ignorant use of eco-friendly policy to justify spending tax dollars on corporate investments and neighbourhood improvements that disproportionately improve the lives of wealthy residents and cost those of us struggling to find affordable housing, fresh food and fair wages. This proposal would have Victorians working poor and unhoused populations lose community centres, public libraries that are open 7 days a week, fresh and accessible food, access to public parks and play spaces, and affordable housing. The city or Victoria (and Esquimalt) does not need more police, we do not need militarized surveillance or more efficient displacement methods. We need REAL, AFFORDABLE HOUSING. We need affordable food. We need access to education.

Below I have flagged a few areas of concern and added notes. Thank you for taking into account the needs and opinions of ALL Victoria Residents, not just those of us who can afford to own a home.

Updating vehicles and switching to "low-carbon-fleet"

City vehicles should be used until they are more expensive to use than to replace. Driving demand for inhumanely harvested precious metals from Congo is an irresponsible use of public funds. Seeing brand new electric vehicles in the hands of Saanich Police and City works while they violently displace unhoused people who cannot access reliable food, or shelter is a gross display of misappropriated finances.

"Zero Waste Streets"

VicPD steals and disposes of a remarkable number of tents, trolleys, wagons, tarps and other valuable private property on a WEEKLY basis in the ongoing campaign to further dehumanize, demoralize and arguably murder unhoused people who are repeatedly turned out into the streets with nothing but the few items they can carry. A good policy for reducing that immense amount of man-made garbage would be to decrease the amount of funding going to displacement initiatives and divert that to funding supportive housing initiatives, food support systems, and community care services like access to medical care and safe-supply.

Short Term Rentals

It seems the new budget would signal an end to enforcing or maintaining short term rental regulations imposed to support renters in finding fair, affordable housing, and limiting landlords from turning a profit on vacation rentals. If this will end, how does the City plan to continue supporting long-term renters and

prevent a widening wealth gap between Landlords and renters? We need ACTUALLY affordable housing. (1800 for a one bedroom is not affordable when minimum wage is \$17.40 and living wage is \$26.78)

10% police budget increase

A nearly 10% increase in a police budget is a clear sign that this city has not heard or does not care to hear its people. We didn't ask for police to attend our protests, DO NOT increase the budget so they can walk next to us, protect violent counter-protestors and reroute traffic. We can do that ourselves. We don't need police working overtime to harass people sheltering outdoors. DO NOT increase the budget to pay cops to look in tents at midnight.

We need this city to invest in community safety initiatives that allow for human dignity and self-determination. Fund shelters and safe supply if you want to address homelessness. Keep libraries open so people can keep warm and dry. Pay for more street team nurses, support workers to be available to folks in need. We don't need cops with guns checking in, we need caring support networks, adequately funded and resourced.

I hope the city will take these concerns into account.

Personal Privacy

Acknowledging that the land on which I live is the unceded territory of the WSÁNEĆ and Lekwungen-speaking peoples.

Territorial acknowledgements are a near insignificant step towards dismantling colonial systems of oppression. I encourage us all to take a moment to think of other, more active ways to enact decolonization, connect with the land, and honour the Indigenous Peoples who continue to steward this land.

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Budget Concerns
Date: December 19, 2024 3:26:02 PM

Hello,

I am a resident and community member in "Victoria", BC. I do NOT wish for the budget of the Victoria Police Department to be increased in 2025. The misuse of public funds on the over-policing and displacement of individuals experiencing homelessness and substance use in our community is NOT where our budget should be allocated. Please divest from these harmful, colonial structures and invest in community care.

Sincerely,

[Personal Privacy](#)

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Community Member Budget Feedback
Date: December 19, 2024 5:02:59 AM

Hello,

I have been a resident of Victoria for 23 years, and have seen the year after year promise to solve the housing crisis. It is severely disappointing to see Victoria increase police and bylaw budgets again and again without taking concrete steps to create safe and reliable housing for the growing population of unhoused people who are trying to survive in this city, despite the completely dehumanizing ways that bylaw and police treat people. Please decrease the police and bylaw budgets and put our money into actual housing. Please do not fund anymore deaths via street sweeps.

Thank you for your time,
[Personal Privacy](#)

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Budget Feedback
Date: December 19, 2024 2:31:28 PM

To whom it may concern,

As a Victoria resident, I don't support the proposed increase to the Victoria Police budget to take up a yet greater percentage of the overall budget. During this housing crisis I would much prefer to see this money go towards community services and support networks that will increase the wellbeing of all.

From: [Victoria UFT](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Draft Budget Response: Request for Increased Funding to Support Community Garden Programs
Date: December 19, 2024 2:43:36 PM
Attachments: [UFT Community Garden Budget Letter.pdf](#)

Good afternoon Mayor and Council,

I am responding on behalf of the Victoria Urban Food Table to provide input for the 2025 Draft City Budget. We are requesting an increase in funding to support Community Garden Programs which we outline in detail in the letter attached below.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to seeing how the City of Victoria will continue to put food security, community health and sustainable food systems at the forefront of your decision-making.

Warmly,

Dinah Johnston (*she/her*)
Administrative Assistant
Victoria Urban Food Table
victoriaurbanfoodtable.com



The Victoria Urban Food Table operates on the unceded and occupied lands of the lək̓ʷəŋən (Lekwungen) speaking peoples, specifically the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations. While we work to strengthen local food systems, we must remember that these current systems play a role in displacing Indigenous people and disrupting their stewardship of the land.



Dear Mayor and Council,

As the Victoria Urban Food Table, a volunteer advisory committee dedicated to providing informed support to Victoria City Council in matters related to food security policy and decision making, we are advocating for a significant increase in funding for the Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator Grant and to revise its Terms of Reference. Specifically, we are requesting:

1. Increase the funding cap per organization and allow applications on a per-garden basis.
2. Double the grants allocation from \$223,230 to \$446,460 for the 2025 City Budget.

The City of Victoria's Strategic Plan, under the "Economic Health and Community Vitality" section, prioritizes initiatives that: "expand supports for urban agriculture, gardening, and food security and food sovereignty initiatives." Strengthening support for community gardens is a practical, cost-effective way to achieve this strategic goal.

Community Impact of Community Gardens

Research consistently demonstrates that well-supported community gardens have a profound positive impact on urban communities, enhancing mental health, fostering social cohesion, and even reducing crime rates ([source](#)). Community gardens reduce social isolation by bringing people together from diverse backgrounds to form supportive networks where they can contribute to their communities. These gardens also serve as empowering gathering spaces for marginalized groups, such as the VIRCS Welcome Gardens, which provides newcomers and refugees a space for social connection, education, and access to culturally relevant foods.

Community gardens play a critical role in addressing rising food insecurity in Victoria. They offer access to fresh, local produce, and culturally relevant foods not readily available in grocery stores. These gardens empower people to take control of their food systems, fostering self-reliance, resilience, and improved physical health.

The City has already recognized the positive impact of community gardens in our communities by providing the "Community Garden Start-Up Grant" which supports the establishment of new gardens, and the "Volunteer Coordinator Grant" to enable neighbourhood organizations to sustain and manage these projects with volunteer support.

Volunteer Coordinator Grant Shortfalls

The \$10,000 annual cap per organization provided by the Volunteer Coordinator grant has remained unchanged since 2018, despite a 17% rise in inflation and the rising costs of maintaining and expanding community garden programs. At the same time, demand for community gardens has surged since 2020. From 2019-2023 there has been:

- 60% increase in community gardens
- 12 new community gardens built on City land: 4 allotment gardens and 8 commons gardens.
- 9 new fruit trees planted in community orchards (6 in Oaklands at Oswald Community Garden; 3 in Fernwood at Alexander Park).
- Demand for community garden plots has increased enormously. For example, at Yates Street Community Garden, 40 people joined the waitlist in 2018, 71 in 2019 and 121 in 2021 - representing a 203% increase from 2018 to 2021.

Volunteer burnout remains a significant challenge, and coordinators are tasked with managing volunteer turnover, integrating equity and inclusion practices, and managing increasingly complex projects.

Under the current Terms of Reference, organizations managing multiple community gardens are limited to a maximum of \$10,000 annually, regardless of the number of gardens they oversee. This policy discourages organizations from coordinating multiple garden projects, which could otherwise benefit from shared resources and economies of scale.

While the current funding allocation represents a solid starting point, it falls short of what is needed to fully realize the potential of these initiatives. Increasing support for the Volunteer Coordinator Grant is essential to ensuring the sustainability and continued success of community garden programs across Victoria.

Advancing Equity and Anti-Racism in Community Gardens in Greater Victoria

Food insecurity continues to disproportionately affect Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour (IBPOC) communities in Greater Victoria, reflecting national trends. Nationally, food insecurity rates for Indigenous and Black households are 28.2% and 28.9%, respectively, compared to 12.4% among white households.

Although specific local data for Greater Victoria is limited, it is evident that IBPOC communities experience similar inequities. Contributing factors include systemic racism, economic disparities, and limited access to culturally appropriate foods.

On November 18, 2024, the Community Garden Roundtable, hosted by Welcome Gardens and the Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CRFAIR), brought together key stakeholders to discuss these challenges. It was acknowledged that systemic racism and discrimination pervade many facets of society, including community gardens. This reality disproportionately impacts historically equity-denied groups, such as Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour, as well as 2SLGBTQI+ individuals, in accessing community garden spaces equitably.

The discussions at the roundtable underscored significant gaps in existing programs and highlighted the urgent need to strengthen food security and gardening initiatives for all community members.

Community garden coordinators have demonstrated a strong commitment to addressing these issues by identifying and bridging gaps in programming and policies to advance equity and anti-racism. However, achieving these goals requires additional resources. The City of Victoria, known for its commitment to equity, accessibility, and anti-racism, is urged to provide enhanced support. This includes funding frameworks, training programs, and actionable measures to foster inclusivity in community gardens.

The current funding, provided through the Community Coordinator Grant, is insufficient to meet the growing demands of this critical work. Coordinators are experiencing significant burnout as they navigate numerous challenges while striving to uphold these vital initiatives. Increased municipal support is essential to ensure the sustainability and success of these efforts.

Our Recommendations

1. Amend the Terms of Reference for the Volunteer Coordinator Grant

Increase the funding cap per organization, allow organizations managing multiple projects to apply for additional funding, and review the policy through an equity lens to make recommendations for how to effectively allocate this funding into the future. The current \$10,000 cap per organization is outdated, failing to account for inflation and the growing demand for community garden programs, especially for organizations coordinating multiple garden projects. This limitation disincentivizes the coordination of multiple garden projects, which could otherwise share resources and operate more efficiently.

2. Double the Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator Grant Allocation

Increase the overall funding allocation for the Volunteer Coordinator Grant from \$223,230 to \$446,460. This would allow community gardens to scale up their programs by funding additional staff hours, offering more educational opportunities, and implementing much-needed EDI initiatives.

The growing body of research shows that investing in community services, recreation, and social programs—including community gardens—has been shown to lower crime rates and support community well-being([source](#)). Investing in community gardens offers a proactive, sustainable strategy to build safer, healthier neighborhoods.

Implications of Not Addressing Shortfalls

If the key amendments to the Terms of Reference and the proposed budget allocation are not made, community garden programs risk becoming unsustainable, jeopardizing the many benefits they provide to Victoria's residents. This also threatens the City's investment in numerous gardens established

through the “Community Garden Start-Up Grant.” Volunteer burnout will continue to rise, reducing the capacity to maintain gardens and engage with diverse community members. Those who rely on these spaces may lose access to vital opportunities for connection, cultural expression, and food security.

By failing to adequately invest in these programs, the City risks not only stalling progress on its strategic priorities related to urban agriculture and food sovereignty but also weakening a proven, community-driven response to pressing social and economic challenges.

Call to Action

We urge the City of Victoria to acknowledge the profound impact community gardens have on our city and the critical need for adequate support. By amending the Terms of Reference, and doubling the Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator grant, the City can ensure that these vital spaces continue to foster strong, resilient, and inclusive communities.

Thank you for considering this request. We look forward to working together to strengthen the future of community gardens in Victoria.

Sincerely,

Victoria Urban Food Table

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Victoria Mayor and Council](#)
Subject: 12% IS TOO MUCH!
Date: November 17, 2024 11:38:39 AM

Dear Leaders,

Please record my opposition to the proposed budget.

12% is too much. Keep it to the increase in the cost of living index – in the 3% to 4% range.

Personal Privacy

Victoria, BC

Personal Privacy

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#); [Engagement-External](#)
Subject: City of Victoria 2025 Draft Budget
Date: November 18, 2024 3:53:11 PM
Attachments: [image001.jpg](#)

Dear Mayor and Council:

Please help me understand how the City of Victoria can justify a 12.17% tax increase. I took a cursory look at the draft budget and quickly found a few expense lines that can easily be reduced, postponed or cancelled. I am certain there are more savings in this draft budget.

Communication and Engagement – 7.5% increase
City Manager’s Office – 14.4% increase
Support Services - \$2,000,000 on climate change. This was \$2,000,000 this year. Please provide details on this expenditure.
People and Culture – 5.5% increase
Corporate contingency – 369% increase
Centennial Square Phase One - \$7,000,000 – do we need this now? Postpone it.

Then there are expense lines that are low like road repairs. A 3% increase when it should be a 10% increase. Our streets are in disrepair.

Request: Does your sidewalk improvement plan include the Government Street sidewalk along the upper causeway across the street from the Empress? If it does not, please include it. It is heavily pitted, difficult to walk on and must be challenging for wheelchairs to navigate.

The cost of living is still very high. The property tax increase could easily be reduced to a 5% - 6% increase if you separate your 'needs' from your 'wants'.

Yours truly,

Personal Privacy



[Biosphere certified.](#)

From: Personal Priva
To: [Victoria Mayor and Council](#)
Subject: Please reconsider the Centennial Square Project
Date: November 22, 2024 1:42:55 PM

The City of Victoria is currently reviewing the 2025 City Budget and we, as taxpayers, we may be again facing significant property tax increases.

The Times Colonist reports that, within the proposed budget, the City has allocated \$94.6 millions to Capital Spending. Upon reviewing the proposed budget I find, on page 89, [LINK](#) , that \$9,645,000 is dedicated to the Park Redevelopment Program. While the City has failed to prove a breakdown as to how much of this is to be dedicated to an unwanted and unneeded Centennial Square Project, an organisation I am active with estimates that Centennial Square, just in Phase One which involves moving the Fountain, etc., would take up at least \$8,500,000.

By removing this single project from the proposed budget, the City could reduce property tax increases by 1%

Please reconsider the Centennial Square Project with an aim of reducing the budget and tax increases.

Thank you,

Personal Privacy

Personal Privacy

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Victoria Mayor and Council](#)
Subject: 2025 Budget input/ public safety
Date: December 3, 2024 3:24:13 PM

Mayor and Council,

I'm a ^{perso} year old female property owner in Victoria. As an avid walker I used to walk downtown to shop or meet friends for coffee. However, the degree to which the crime and disorder has risen over the past few years has made me feel unsafe to do so.

Public safety is your number one mandate period. It disheartens me to hear you are trying to play politics with your taxpayers safety by requesting a two million dollar budget cut for Victoria Police.

If economic times are that tough for you to compromise public safety by squeezing Vic P.D. how can you possibly justify spending millions on Centennial Square?

Please reconsider.

Regards, Personal Privacy
Sent from my iPad

From: Personal Privacy on behalf of Personal Privacy
To: [Victoria Mayor and Council](#)
Subject: VicPD budget
Date: December 4, 2024 9:34:57 AM

Why is VicPD immune to budget restraint? I'm not calling to defund the police but I'm calling for them to act like they face the same fiscal realities as ordinary Victorians. It's not easy for anyone.

I cast eight votes in the last municipal election and all eight were elected. I share your values — for that reason I'm concerned cost increases will hurt your chances of re-election and turn back progress in Victoria. These are the contemporary political winds.

Politically, VicPD outclasses council and sets the whole narrative. If council opposes cost increases, I suggest taking additional steps to demonstrate it. More combative than a strongly worded letter. In the spirit of constructive brainstorming (rather than just complaining) here are ideas for exerting control. Some are more practical than others and some may reflect a poor understanding of municipal civics.

1. Victoria is funded by taxes, that money goes into a washing machine, and VicPD is funded out the other end. This means VicPD is financially accountable to council but not to the community (council is accountable to the community). Suggestion: help VicPD develop a sense of accountability using the stormwater model. In a revenue-neutral manner, remove VicPD funding from property taxes and bill it separately to property owners. This will make the enormous scale of VicPD budgets more transparent. It will make year-over-year changes clear to taxpayers. This is massively different from a pie chart in the mayor's annual letter.

2. Double or triple downtown parking fees. Use stickers on every meter and signage at every parkade to indicate the base parking rate is unchanged but the additional 100% or 200% represents a VicPD surcharge. Print the breakdown prominently on receipts. Aside from VicPD itself the loudest advocates of police expansion are suburbanites. Do City of Victoria taxpayers value cheap parking? I live by Hillside Mall and [Personal Privacy](#)

3. Discourage unnecessary police activities by charging for them. If schools want police, for example, come up with a funding formula where schools can pay for it. Divide the police budget by headcount and use that figure to bill per officer. I support schools when they say police are unwanted but this model will make it clear to advocates they can choose police or music programs.

4. If the police resist fiscal accountability, call for replacement of VicPD leadership. Finding efficiencies and optimizing resources is a skill and it may be time to recognize we do not have the right skills in VicPD leadership. I shudder to say it but perhaps it's time for an MBA manager instead of a police union loyalist.

5. Identify and quantify how Victoria pays for policing beyond the scope of normal municipal law enforcement. For example, what do we pay for policing the legislature and regional protests? What is our police spending per capita compared to Oak Bay? Request top up funding from the province. Perhaps theatrics are in order — print an invoice for these differences on a 6ft tall banner and make a media show of delivering it to the legislature. Victoria taxpayers cover all sorts of regional responsibilities and we could be more vocal about pointing this out. (I fully recognize current council is doing a better job on this front than past councils, especially re: housing and homelessness.)

Good luck and thanks for your hard work.

Personal Privacy

Victoria

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Victoria Mayor and Council](#)
Subject: Budget Cut Priorities
Date: December 10, 2024 9:53:28 AM

Good morning,

I understand that budget cuts to offset tax increases are on the docket this week.

I'd like to advocate for two things: first, don't make any cuts to safe streets or cycling infrastructure - allowing people to cycle safely is good for the budget long term, as cycling streets require very little maintenance. They will also increase the tax base, as they will allow people to sell their cars in order to spend more on housing costs, quite a bit of which goes to the city. They also build a larger consumer base for local businesses, which also goes into city coffers. I do think you might need to explore how to build cycling infrastructure more cheaply, as the posted budgets for biketoria do seem to be higher (as they are combined with a large number of other street improvements).

The second thing I'd like to advocate for more residential and commercial units across the city. Your tax income comes from local homeowners and businesses, so allowing more of each is the only thing that will make the city financially viable long term.

The goal is to make more housing and businesses without requiring too much staff or city participation, which will create unnecessary expenditures. To do this, you could simplify zoning rules like either doing away with redundant metrics (FAR and form-based regulations for housing are redundant - you could easily use one or the other to cut down on staff time), or just loosen regulations on the whole. For example, you could create a windfall by simply allowing certain types of businesses to be opened on all residential land, as our neighbours in Washington state are considering. I understand there are concerns about creating urban villages with commercial centres, but perhaps this should happen naturally by seeing which residential cafes or corner stores succeed or fail and building around that information. Allowing neighbourhood businesses everywhere will also provide more eyes on the street, which will lower policing costs wherever these businesses manage to stay open.

You could also just do away with all parking minimums in the city, as thousands of other cities across the continent have done. This will get more housing to the market quickly, and give developers more financial wiggle room to provide amenity contributions if necessary.

Do these two things, and the city will be in good financial standing long term.

Thank you with your time and consideration,

[Personal Privacy](#)

From: Persona
To: [Victoria Mayor and Council](#)
Subject: Please don't increase the police budget
Date: December 12, 2024 6:21:35 PM

Dear Mayor and Council:

I'm writing to implore you to not grant a budget increase to the Victoria-Esquimalt Police Board. As you know, they have asked for \$1.155 million dollars in new funding for 2025. The city and the police force could both save money by ending by-law and police harassment of folks living in tents in city parks and streets. The money saved could be spent on solutions such as housing and mental health support. As you know, displacing people day after day, forcing them to pack their belongings and often even disposing of their belongings only worsens the problem of homelessness in this city. Fences and police are not a solution. Housing, adequate mental health support, and compassion are!

I live near Oaklands Park, one of the only parks where people are still permitted to shelter overnight in the city. The people there living there are part of the community. They are trying to survive. Bylaw and police were sweeping up belongings at 7:30am this morning.

Stop the sweeps. People's lives depend on it.

Personal Privacy

Victoria, BC. Personal Privacy

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Centennial Square
Date: November 25, 2024 2:56:47 PM

Dear Victoria city Council,

It is difficult to imagine how our city, as stressed as it is financially, would proceed with the centennial square reconfiguration at about \$10 million dollars when we ask our police force to pare \$2 million dollars off their budget?!

Too many city tax dollars are spent on ideological areas which do not contribute to the well being of our citizens. In walking through centennial square today the adjoining retail and office spaces on the north side of the square are dark foreboding spaces that contribute to the barren nature of the square. They were originally planned for human energy and interaction and have been sublimated to office spaces that have little or no engaging public interplay!

If you actually think that a splash pad will bring citizen interaction to this space you have forsaken any rational connection with reality. The costly obliteration of the centennial fountain is really a ridiculous waste of tax dollars most assuredly needed in other areas.

In holding a referendum on the Crystal pool construction why not add a further question on centennial square to find out the actual public thoughts on this proposal? When the BC museum proposal was universally rejected by the public our former premier rescinded the idea in favour of more prudent use of funds. You are actually in the same situation and a sober second thought would be appreciated by the majority of Victorians.

PS - our city roadways are in appalling condition!

Respectfully and Sincerely

Personal Privacy

[Personal Privacy](#)

From: [Sanctuary Youth Centre Victoria](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: A budget submission
Date: December 19, 2024 11:12:41 AM
Attachments: [City of Victoria Budget 2025.pdf](#)

To Whom It May Concern,

Attached is a brief budget submission to the City of Victoria and Legislative services for the 2025 year.

Kindly let me know if you have any questions,
Respectfully,

Darin Reimer



Sanctuary Youth Centre

email: sanctuaryyouth@outlook.com

website: www.sanctuaryyouth.org

phone: 250-385-6255

mailing address: Box 100, Victoria BC, V8W 2M1

centre location: 767 Humboldt St. Victoria



December 16, 2024

City of Victoria, Engagement Team
Legislative Services
1 Centennial Square
Victoria, BC V8W 1P6

Email: legislativeservices@victoria.ca

Re: Budget 2025 recommendations to support vulnerable youth in the City of Victoria

Sanctuary Youth Centre is pleased to make this submission to the City of Victoria's Budget 2025 Consultation and we thank you in advance for considering this input.

We have two recommendations that support the [City's 2025 Budget Survey](#) findings that "working with community partners and other levels of government to improve safety and well-being" is a top-two priority for more investment in the coming year.

About Sanctuary Youth Centre

Sanctuary Youth Centre is a drop-in centre for street-entrenched and at-risk youth between the ages of 14 and 22. Located in the basement of Church of Our Lord in downtown Victoria, Sanctuary serves as a safe place for some of the most vulnerable people in our city offering access to washrooms, showers, laundry facilities, clothing, hot meals and other personal supports provided by our trained staff and volunteers. Each month our centre welcomes more than 170 individuals.

Recommendation #1: Additional funding to support at-risk youth during winter and extreme weather events

Currently, there are three main organizations that provide year-round drop-in shelter for homeless youth: Youth Empowerment Society, Sanctuary Youth Centre and the Out of the Rain Youth Shelter.

The Youth Empowerment Society runs its Alliance Club drop-in centre Monday through Thursday from 9:30 am - 5:30pm and Friday 9:30 am - 2:00 pm. Sanctuary Youth Centre, meanwhile, covers weekends and is open Wednesday through Sunday from 4:00 pm - 8:00pm. Overnight, the Out of the Rain Youth Shelter operated by Beacon Community Services provides a safe and dry overnight place for youth to sleep from 8:30 pm - 7:30 am.

In 2021, the City of Victoria provided supplemental funding which allowed Sanctuary Youth to: 1) extend our operations by three additional hours Wednesday through Sunday during the winter months at a cost of \$25,000; and 2) to open as a warming shelter during extreme weather events, 14 days at a cost of \$500/day. This initiative was a success and we recommend these additional funds be made a part of the City's 2025 budget to help get youth safely out of the cold when most needed. **Estimated cost: \$32,000**

We thank you for considering this recommendation. Please contact me if you have any questions or would like further input.

Respectfully,

Darin Reimer
Executive Director, Sanctuary Youth Centre

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'DR', is positioned above a thin horizontal line.

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Cc: [Victoria Mayor and Council; Marianne Alto \(Mayor\)](#)
Subject: City of Victoria Draft Budget 2025-2029
Date: December 20, 2024 3:01:06 PM
Attachments: [Feedback on Victoria Draft Budget 2025-2029 K.Mackenzie.pdf](#)

Hello there,

Please see attached for my feedback on the 2025-2029 Victoria Draft Budget.

Thank-you,

Personal Privacy (she/her)

If you need any supports or changes to make our communication and/or interactions more accessible and inclusive, please let me know how I can adjust.

RE: Feedback on the 2025-2029 Draft Budget

Dear Mayor and Council,

Thank-you for the opportunity to provide input on the 2025-2029 Draft Budget. I am disappointed not to see an engagement survey this year, and while I have cited methodological flaws with previous surveys, I do believe that multiple ways of engagement are important for ensuring numerous and diverse responses. I hope that you will bring the survey format back next year.

My biggest areas of feedback in the 2025-2029 Draft Budget are related to “Community Safety and Wellbeing”. I believe this title is a bit of a misnomer given the spending categories, which largely focus on law and order approaches to addressing public safety such as policing and bylaw enforcement, that I do not associate with the concept of “wellbeing”.

I do not support the proposed 9.71% budget increase for the Victoria Police Department (VicPD), especially given the impact it has on the proposed tax increase of 12.17%, the highest tax increase proposed in the last 10 years. I strongly believe that Council should be pushing for an independent audit of VicPD’s expenditures, given the significant budget increases demanded by VicPD year after year. Policing and other law and order measures used to respond to homelessness, visible poverty, mental illness and substance use are the costliest and least effective ways to truly address these social issues.

Related, I have recently been deeply disturbed with the City of Victoria’s approach to addressing homelessness and sheltering. I do not support the city spending \$5.3M in bylaw services, especially when so much of this budget line item goes to street sweeps along Pandora Ave., displacing unhoused folks across the city and consistently throwing out people’s sentimental and survival possessions.

In a 2023 [study](#) published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, researchers found that encampment sweeps, like those happening daily in Victoria parks and on Pandora Ave., lead to substantial increases in overdose deaths, hospitalizations and life-threatening health issues. In fact, they found that these sweeps may contribute to 15-25% of deaths among the unhoused population over 10 years. In the last month, we have lost at least 13 people in the unhoused community in Victoria. I believe there is a direct correlation between the City’s encampment policies and these deaths.

While housing and social services may be the responsibility of higher levels of government, the City of Victoria’s approach to enforcing sheltering is squarely in your authority. While Council also considers spending an [additional \\$4.7M to enforce the daytime sheltering ban](#), I would like to encourage you to not only think of the financial costs, but the human costs of this daytime sheltering ban.

I believe that community safety and wellbeing encompass other important investments that, while you may argue are responsibilities of higher levels of government, you can and should invest in. I urge you to consider increasing your City Grants budget of \$6.2M to include direct investments in programs like AVI's Community-Led Crisis Response team, housing outreach teams, harm reduction programs and other important initiatives that actually improve wellbeing and save lives.

I also urge you to use every tool in your toolbox to bring more shelter-rate housing to Victoria. While the City of Victoria is seen as [provincial leaders](#) in new housing builds, very few of these new builds are addressing the needs of people who are experiencing or at acute risk of experiencing homelessness. The truth is that people will continue to live in encampments until housing is available that meets their financial and social needs.

A community is safest when everyone has their basic needs met and their fundamental human rights respected. Thank-you for considering this feedback in your budget deliberations.

Respectfully,

Personal Privacy


Victoria

From: [Pat Rundell](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Budget Feedback
Date: December 20, 2024 1:23:33 PM
Attachments: [KTYP - COV 2025 Budget Feedback.docx.pdf](#)

Hello;

Please find attached a letter to Mayor and Council providing feedback on the proposed 2025 City Budget.

Regards;

	<input type="checkbox"/> Pat Rundell Executive & Artistic Director He/Him
	pat@kaleidoscope.bc.ca
	Kaleidoscope Theatre for Young People
	250.383.8124
	613 Pandora Avenue
	Victoria, BC, V8W 1N8
	www.kaleidoscope.bc.ca

Kaleidoscope Theatre for Young People acknowledges with respect the Lekwungen peoples on whose traditional territory Kaleidoscope works and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.



December 20, 2024

Mayor and Council
City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square
Victoria, B.C. V8W 1P6

Dear Mayor Alto and Council,

Re: 2025 Budget Community Feedback

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the 2025 City Budget, particularly the staff report that details reductions to arts and culture services and programs. As leaders of our vibrant and diverse community, your continued commitment to fostering arts and culture is crucial for the health, vitality, and resilience of our city.

Arts and culture are far more than leisure activities; they are foundational to the economic, social, and emotional well-being of our community. British Columbia's arts, culture, and heritage sector is a vital economic engine, generating an impressive \$8.6 billion annually. Here in Victoria, arts and culture programs drive tourism, attract skilled workers, and contribute significantly to our local economy. A reduction in investment would not only jeopardize these economic benefits but also undermine the city's reputation as a leading cultural hub.

Beyond economic metrics, arts and culture profoundly impact societal well-being. These programs inspire creativity, foster connection, and build resilience, particularly during challenging times. They also play a pivotal role in addressing current social issues by providing platforms for dialogue and understanding. Arts programming, especially for young people, cultivates empathy, critical thinking, and self-expression—skills essential for the leaders of tomorrow. Studies consistently show that participation in the arts enhances academic achievement, mental health, and social engagement among youth, making these programs indispensable for a healthy and thriving society.

Moreover, arts and culture create a sense of identity and belonging. They bring people together across diverse backgrounds, fostering unity and strengthening the fabric of our community. In the face of global challenges, the arts provide solace, inspiration, and hope—qualities that are invaluable for individual and collective resilience.

Since 2019, British Columbia's cultural economy has outperformed every other province. This remarkable achievement underscores the importance of sustained investment in the arts, yet it also highlights what is at stake should funding be diminished. A decision to reduce support for arts and culture would come at the expense of the citizens of Victoria, eroding the capacity of the arts community to contribute meaningfully to our city's vitality and to address pressing social issues.

I urge you to reconsider the proposed reductions to arts and culture services and programs within the 2025 City Budget. Sustained investment in these programs is not merely an act of support for artists but a pledge to uphold the economic, social, and emotional well-being of our city. Let us work together to ensure that arts and culture remain integral to Victoria's identity and resilience.

Thank you for your consideration and for your ongoing leadership. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further and to collaborate on ensuring a bright and vibrant future for Victoria.

Sincerely,



Pat Rundell
Executive & Artistic Director
pat@kaleidoscope.bc.ca
250-383-8124 x101

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Victoria Mayor and Council](#)
Subject: Budget
Date: October 25, 2024 9:34:53 AM

Hello,

Fixing aging infrastructure? Necessary. Keeping roads in good repair? Necessary. Finding more medical staff and Doctors? Necessary. Increase in police budget? Necessary.
More bike lanes, 'art' ping pong table, free drugs, multi-colour/art crosswalks, fireworks? All fall in the nice but necessary category.

Sincerely,
[Personal Privacy](#)

James Bay

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Victoria Mayor and Council](#)
Subject: Draft budget
Date: October 25, 2024 10:00:58 AM

People have had enough. Thw tax increase should be around the inflation rate no more. You need to have a non municipal or ex municipal efficiency group come in and cut the size of local govt drastically. No more anything that does not support the core, fundamental services. Fix the potholes, make the water and sewer run, basic services without virtue signaling. There is so much waste!!! Minimum of 25% if not more should go.

Same goes for police and fire services. A non police or ex police efficiency expert goes in and changes both models. So many cuts could be made to policing, so many high paid spots that could be civilianized, there is so much wasted time, so much wasted money. And you wouldn't jeopardize safety you would improve it. (I am a retired police officer).

Same with fire dept. Essentially, we do the same thing we did 150 yrs ago only now we have trucks instead of horses. We can't have x percent of our entire budget paying a huge amount of ppl to sleep. It doesn't work anymore. And it is not efficient either. We need more ambulances not fire ppl working 24 hour shift so they get 96 hours off after working 24 hours on their second rotation. (who the heck approved that?) The point is an efficiency expert that is not an ex municipal, police or fire hack could go thru police, fire and the city and go wow! Waste waste waste No private company could run like this.

It is time. Quit hitting the taxpayers.

[Personal Privacy](#)

From: [Personal Priva](#)
To: [Victoria Mayor and Council](#)
Subject: Taxes
Date: October 25, 2024 9:29:53 AM

Just an email of support for the tax increase. Add the 2025 proposed increase of 12% to the last 2 years of tax increases and we land on a very reasonable and affordable 25% tax rate increase over the 3 year period.

[Personal Privacy](#)

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Engagement-External](#)
Subject: 12% tax increase for property owners in Victoria...!
Date: October 30, 2024 2:07:06 PM

To City Council,

You have been very friendly to the class of developers and builders in Victori in recent years. Their (bad) buildings is obvious everywhere and makes travel across the city challenging at time as their equipment and construction workers seem everywhere. They are allowed to disregard established rules with the blessing of city council.

As a recent article stated, those developers who build units less than 30 square feet do NOT PAY for expenses like sewage infrastructure, roads etc...!!!!

As I read of Victoria's staff suggestion of hiking the tax on property to 12% I wonder WHY they and city council are SO NICE to developers, protecting their already high profits, yet so care-less when it comes to property owners?

Get the developers to pay and slow down on the increase of taxes at a time when many are already finding it difficult to deal with inflation.

[Personal Privacy](#)

Victoria

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Victoria Mayor and Council](#)
Subject: VicPD Budget
Date: November 23, 2024 2:54:28 PM

To Mayor Alto and Councillors,

I am writing to urge you to not grant the proposed budget increase of nearly 10% to VicPD.

As I hope you are all aware, the police in our city have been involved in many incidents of violence against citizens and escalation of situations. I see the police chief has stated that losing \$2 million of their budget would put the public in jeopardy, which is absurd. It is clear fear mongering to the public, which is unacceptable. There is a lot of research around what contributes to decreased public safety, and the answer lies in social supports - not police budgets.

The police do not, have not, and will never address the growing unhoused population in Victoria. Unhoused people very rarely pose a risk to housed people. In fact, unhoused people are at a much higher risk of experiencing violence and/or assault than the general population. The police have a terrible track record in responding to mental health and addiction crises. In the past, I have been on the receiving end of wellness checks and have had to call them for our unhoused neighbours, and both times were frankly traumatizing. They are woefully unequipped to deal with the issues most often affecting unhoused folks.

It is time to change our messaging about ways to get people off the streets. There are many good studies on the topic and many cities around the world that have effectively solved their housing crisis. None of them involve increased policing.

I am not even asking you to cut the police budget, though I firmly believe we should be doing that. I ask that you please reject the proposed increase.

I did not include citations for any of the studies I referenced, but I am happy to find them and provide them to the Mayor and Councillors if it would be helpful.

Thank you for your time and attention,
[Personal Privacy](#)

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Victoria Mayor and Council](#)
Cc: letters@timescolonist.com
Subject: 12 % Property Tax increase
Date: October 25, 2024 11:28:51 AM

Dear Council,

Why are you still building bike lanes and other Vanity projects. The City can't afford them. If I want a new car and I can't afford it, I don't buy it because I can't arbitrarily increase my income by asking someone (taxpayer) for a bigger salary(revenues). Demanding more money from the taxpayers for Vanity projects is what Council has been doing for years.

Victoria is a retirement Mecca and fewer and fewer older people ride bikes or use pools and parks. Yet they still need to go shopping and appointments and public transportation is not efficient or reliable.

Has any one actually counted the number of bikes using the paths? Have any of the planners actually observed how many commercial vehicles, busses and first responders get stuck in grid lock? Has anybody ever asked the commercial road user what decreasing car lanes does to their operating costs.? Why do you put bike lanes on main roads when a lot of residential roads running parallel to the main roads are empty? How do you expect people to give up cars when you haven't provided efficient public transportation? Don't say it's not your duty to fix public transportation when you are creating a problem without regard for what the citizens actually need.

The bike argument is based on environmental and physical benefits.

However that argument was developed in an era when EVs were not mainstream. Now EVs are becoming more common and will soon be the norm in new vehicle purchases. Yet, you have downgraded the infrastructure to the benefit of bike riders that cannot be used by seniors or for going shopping (by Families and others) You have effectively increased the time required to take public transportation and thereby increased the cost of public transportation and cost of pollution by cars in gridlock.

It is time that Victoria city council puts on its adult thinking cap and halt all expenditures that are not necessary like: bike lanes, improving and expanding parks, sport facilities and other special interest projects. Perhaps, if the Council focused on creating a vibrant downtown your tax revenue could be increased with less vacant store fronts.

The Mayor and Council are due for increases in salary. Perhaps you should earn it and not just increase our taxes.

Regards
[Personal Privacy](#)

Ps We won't even talk about homelessness and putting people in parking lot's instead of an actual solution.
Sent from my iPad

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Victoria Mayor and Council](#)
Cc: [Letters \(Times-Colonist\)](#)
Subject: Centennial Square and Fountain
Date: November 18, 2024 1:26:18 PM

Attention: Mayor and Council

Regarding the currently proposed budget:

The huge increase in property taxes which will result if the current proposed budget receives approval is very unfair to the citizens of Victoria.

May I request a focus on maintaining the Current design of Centennial Square instead of the wholesale and costly changes proposed.

Yours truly,

Personal Privacy

Victoria (west) BC Personal Privacy

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Victoria Mayor and Council](#)
Cc: [GNA](#)
Subject: Property tax increase 12.2% opportunity for feedback to whom?
Date: November 17, 2024 1:17:38 PM

Hi,

To what e-mail should we address our concerns about a 12.2% property tax increase? Is this the correct place?

<https://www.timescolonist.com/local-news/victoria-extends-chance-to-weigh-in-on-budget-to-dec-20-9818508>

I strongly propose it remains at the average annual inflation rate of only 3% and that grants and handouts to advocates and drug addicts be cut out entirely.

Thanks a lot.

Personal Privacy

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Victoria Mayor and Council](#)
Subject: reducing the very high budgetary increase
Date: November 19, 2024 10:01:24 AM

I would recommend two changes:

1. Eliminate the unnecessary destruction of the Fountain in Centennial Square. Destroying it is a slap in the face to those communities who paid for it in honour of the City's 100 th anniversary.
2. Slow down the rate of building bike lanes at the cost of vehicular lanes. Reduce the number of changes made each year by 50 to 75%.

And I would suggest reversing the changes already made to Richardson St. I have to go there [Personal Privacy](#) and all it has become is a parking lot for trucks.

I have never seen more than one or two bicycles on that street when I go there and streets like Kipling St are clogged up.

[Personal Privacy](#)

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Victoria Mayor and Council](#)
Subject: Take this opportunity that budget constraints allow!
Date: November 21, 2024 5:53:00 PM

November 21, 2024

Mayor and Council
City of Victoria
Via email

Your Worship and Council,

I am writing regarding Centennial Square's renovation to highlight an extraordinary opportunity that current budget discussions have opened up - the chance to transform necessary spending into visionary investment.

The current proposal to replace the historic fountain with seasonal water features represents a fundamental misunderstanding of civic investment. A splash pad, while initially attractive, offers limited seasonal use and serves a narrow demographic. This is spending without lasting return - the very definition of the "cost center" thinking we need to move beyond.

Consider instead how Seattle's Watershed project transformed a routine development into an environmental and educational destination. By treating 400,000 gallons of toxic runoff annually that would otherwise harm salmon populations, it doesn't just create a public space - it tells a compelling story about environmental stewardship that draws visitors and inspires action. This is precisely the kind of thinking that could elevate Centennial Square from expense to investment.

Victoria's tourism economy thrives because of our marine wildlife - our orcas, salmon, and seabirds are not just environmental treasures but economic engines. A regeneratively designed plaza that visibly demonstrates how urban spaces can protect these species would become a must-visit destination, drawing eco-conscious travelers and educational tourism year-round. Imagine school groups learning about marine conservation, tourists understanding their connection to our ecosystem, and residents taking pride in their city's leadership - all through the daily function of our main civic square.

The Centennial Fountain was originally gifted through municipal cooperation as a permanent symbol of our shared civic values. Its replacement should raise the bar even higher. A thoughtfully designed plaza incorporating advanced stormwater management could:

- Actively improve harbor ecosystem health year-round
- Create a compelling educational destination that enhances our tourism offering
- Demonstrate visible environmental stewardship that inspires public action
- Serve diverse community needs in all seasons
- Position Victoria as a leader in regenerative urban design
- Generate ongoing positive returns on investment through reduced environmental remediation costs and increased tourist engagement

At this moment of budget reconsideration, Council has the perfect opportunity to be both fiscally prudent and environmentally progressive. Why merely spend money updating a plaza

when we could invest in infrastructure that pays continuous dividends through environmental restoration, enhanced tourism, and civic pride? This is the rare chance to be penny wise and pound brilliant - to create a public space that works as hard for our community's future as the original fountain has for the past 60 years.

I urge Council to seize this moment to transform Centennial Square from a maintenance line item into a regenerative asset that demonstrates Victoria's leadership in sustainable urban design. The choice between simple renovation and visionary reinvention is really a choice between spending and investing in our city's future.

Respectfully submitted,

Personal Privacy

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Victoria Mayor and Council](#)
Subject: property tax increase and the police budget
Date: November 23, 2024 8:56:55 PM

Hello mayor and council,

Reading up earlier today on the police board refusing any cuts from their proposed \$7m budget increase alongside all other city departments currently exploring ways to reduce costs. As a homeowner who will be subject to the forecasted 12% property tax increase, I find this completely unacceptable, though wholly unsurprising. Police budget increases, at almost a quarter of the city's operating cost expenditure, always seem to come with the explicit threat that any interference in this organizational expansion presents a risk to 'public safety.' How exactly is this quantified? What kind of risk might be incurred, by whom? Are there not ways to reallocate resources, find efficiencies, utilize better strategies? Or is the only option truly more money. I imagine the engineering department faces a more rigorous audit of budget, projects, tactics, efficacy, and outcomes.

At a time when all governments and PSOs are facing decreased revenues and increased costs, the police cannot have special status for greater budget increases through scare tactics. A 12% property tax increase is too much for Victorians, and I expect all departments at the city to do their part in reducing this number. I appreciate you considering these thoughts from a concerned taxpayer. Best, [Personal Privacy](#)

Personal Privacy

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Victoria Mayor and Council](#)
Subject: Draft 2025 Budget feedback
Date: November 24, 2024 1:49:38 PM

Here are my random point form thoughts regarding the 2025 budget.

- This city and province needs to exercise some fiscal responsibility. The Eby government assumed a 5 billion dollar surplus and has managed to turn it into a 9 billion dollar deficit with not a lot to show for it.
- According to the Federal Parliamentary Budget Office BC is in one of the worst financial positions of all the provinces.
- Clearly the provincial election demonstrated that a significant portion of the electric doesn't agree with the NDP's free wheeling, ultra left wing spending spree that it's been on the last few years.
- This council needs to respect the highlights of the MNP Governance report. Lest we forget.
 - stop expanding core services particularly when they fall under provincial jurisdiction. Dowler Place for example. Just for once stay in your lanes and make the province pick up the load.
 - public safety is your primary mandate. Therefore, fully fund VicPD. Trying to defund VicPD by 2 million is outrageous.
- In a time of necessary fiscal restraint I suggest you start trimming some funding from all of yours and previous councils initiated programs.
- Almost certainly the tax payer is going to be hit with the cost of replacing the Crystal Pool for the next 20 years.
- This council needs to focus on the absolute basics because the tax payer doesn't have a bottomless pit of money.
 - public safety
 - infrastructure
 - fixing pot holes!

Kind Regards,

Personal Privacy

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Victoria Mayor and Council](#)
Subject: Victoria City Tax Increases
Date: November 25, 2024 9:56:09 AM

Dear Madam Mayor, I am writing regarding my concerns regarding the proposed 12.17% tax increase. It is times like these the city needs to take pause and consider the necessary spending over whimsical spending such as the Centennial Square project. If it is necessary to increase my taxes by such a massive amount I personally feel it is time to take a hard look at where the money is going. The Crystal Pool may be necessary but is it necessary to build everything at once, could it not be built initially with the pool and in future make additions for all of the frills such as a fitness centre and multi-purpose rooms and gathering spaces that have been incorporated into the master plan.

We all need to live within our means and the city council is no exception. Please reconsider your approach to the many pet projects that you have on your agenda and consider who's actually paying the bill.

Sincerely,

[Personal Privacy](#)

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Budget feedback
Date: December 19, 2024 9:21:59 PM

Hi, I'm grateful to have the opportunity to give feedback on the city's budget. For context: I'm a homeowner who lives in [Personal Privacy](#). I have a young family and we use our local recreation facilities as much as we can. While I'm not stoked about Crystal pool closing I acknowledge that it's necessary to create an inclusive recreation facility. My main question is, given that the Victoria police are requesting 23% of the budget in a year we are also having a referendum for a massive capital infrastructure project, what is the justification for allocating almost 1/4 of our city's budget to the police department? Is our police department open to an even a temporary budget reduction in order to make a new regional recreation hub happen? Policing accounts for 1/4 -1/3 of our city's budget, not to mention our police station is right next to our recreation centre, so I'm hoping they will take our community's well being into their ask. Anyway, hoping our police department will weigh in on this. If they really support community well being, I'm hopeful they will redirect some of their money towards strengthening a community recreation hub.

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Support for funding of Music & Arts
Date: December 19, 2024 10:29:29 PM

Hello,

I'm writing to express my strong support for maintaining investments in arts and music grants as part of the 2025 City Budget. Initiatives like the Eventide Music Series are essential to our community's cultural fabric and vibrancy, and are a big part of what makes me feel connected in this city.

I applaud the city for supporting initiatives that increase the number of available venues for the arts, like the purchase of Herman's, or the weekly Eventide series in Centennial Square. [Personal Privacy](#), I can't tell you how important it is to have small and mid-size venues that allow for music communities to exist.

I understand that there are many competing demands on the 2025 budget but PLEASE PLEASE do not make any more cuts to music, venue & arts funding or programs.

Best,

[Personal Privacy](#)

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Draft Budget: Don't Cut Services
Date: December 19, 2024 7:25:22 PM

Hello,

I have lived in Victoria my entire life and I am worried about budget cuts for the 2025 draft budget. If we can't pay for the services we need, then you need to raise property taxes. They are already the most progressive form of taxes in the city, and higher valued property will pay more than lower valued properties. People who happen to own property but are low-income can defer their taxes, and this is also true for elderly individuals and those who can't work. Cutting services is the best way to hurt poor folks and working class people why shielding the richer folks from paying their share.

Detached homes also use the most in terms of service costs while paying the least (a multi family housing building will pay significantly more taxes than a detached home on the same lot). If we need more property tax income, we should simply upzone the city and receive a huge increase to the tax base. The fact we have a housing crisis, and are now considering cutting services instead of raising taxes, and we still aren't just blanket upzoning to solve both is extremely unfortunate.

Please consider either raising taxes or broad upzoning to fix this issue.

Thank you,

Personal PII

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Budget Feedback
Date: December 19, 2024 7:49:24 PM
Attachments: [2025 Budget Feedback.pdf](#)

Dear Mayor and Members of Victoria City Council and Staff,

As a Victoria resident of 18 years, and **Personal Privacy** for well over a decade, I am writing to express my concerns regarding the challenges faced by the arts community and to emphasize the importance of prioritizing greater support for artists and arts organizations in the 2025 city budget.

Throughout my career, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative power of the arts in shaping a vibrant, inclusive, and connected community. Yet, I have never seen the need for support reach such a critical level as it has today. Arts organizations across the city are struggling to sustain their work, largely due to the escalating costs of renting and leasing physical spaces. This trend jeopardizes the very foundation of our cultural ecosystem.

Affordable and secure physical locations are essential for artists and arts organizations to flourish. These spaces serve not only as workplaces but as vital hubs for community engagement and expression. However, rising rents and the constant threat of displacement have forced many organizations to shut their doors. Without proactive intervention, we will lose the vibrancy that makes Victoria a cultural beacon.

I urge the council to consider the following measures in the 2025 budget:

1. **Increased Funding for Arts Organizations:** Allocate additional resources to support cultural infrastructure, operating costs, and rent subsidies for arts organizations.
2. **Investment in Affordable Arts Spaces:** Collaborate with local developers and community partners to create or preserve affordable spaces specifically designated for artists and arts organizations.
3. **Long-term Leases for Non-Profits:** Work towards policies that provide long-term stability for arts groups by facilitating extended lease terms at below-market rates.
4. **Permissive Tax Exemptions:** Please consider introducing policies that grant permissive tax exemptions for non-profit arts organizations leasing commercial spaces. Many municipalities across Canada have already adopted such measures, recognizing the critical role of cultural organizations in supporting healthy and vibrant communities.

These initiatives are not only an investment in the arts but also in the social, economic, and cultural health of our city. The arts contribute significantly to our local economy, enhance the quality of life for residents, and serve as a powerful tool for social cohesion and inclusion.

Thank you for considering this urgent matter. I am confident that with bold leadership and a commitment to supporting the arts, Victoria can continue to thrive as a cultural capital for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Personal Privacy

December 19, 2024

From:

Personal Privacy

Victoria, BC Personal Privacy

Personal Privacy

To:

Victoria City Council

Victoria, BC V8W1P6

legislativeservices@victoria.ca

Dear Mayor and Members of Victoria City Council and Staff,

As a Victoria resident of 18 years, and **Personal Privacy** for well over a decade, I am writing to express my concerns regarding the challenges faced by the arts community and to emphasize the importance of prioritizing greater support for artists and arts organizations in the 2025 city budget.

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Thank you for considering this urgent matter. I am confident that with bold leadership and a commitment to supporting the arts, Victoria can continue to thrive as a cultural capital for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Personal Privacy

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Draft Budget Feedback
Date: December 23, 2024 8:24:18 AM

To whom it may concern,

The additional \$4.7M to enforce the daytime sheltering ban is a harmful use of resources. Encampment sweeps lead to substantial increases in death among the unhoused population. The unhoused are some of the most vulnerable and poverty-stricken members of our community and need our help. While housing and social services does not fall under the Council's purview, the City of Victoria is in control of how they approach the enforcement on sheltering. Please reconsider.

Thank you,
Personal Privacy

Subject: Supporting the Creative Community of Victoria

Dear Members of Victoria City Council,

Arts and music are the heart of our community. Spaces like 780 Blanshard and organizations such as VIVAS and Haus of Owl are essential to bringing people together, fostering collaboration, and amplifying the voices that make our city unique.

As a member of **Personal Privacy**, I have found an inclusive and inspiring space where artists like me can pursue our creative passions. This community not only nurtures individual growth but also enriches the broader cultural landscape of Victoria.

Programs like the Victoria Music Strategy Grant have empowered underrepresented groups, strengthening our social fabric and inspiring dialogue across our community. Cutting funding now would not only diminish the impact of past investments but also disrupt the community connections these programs have fostered.

I urge you to protect and prioritize arts funding to sustain the creative energy and community spirit that define Victoria.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Sincerely,

Personal Privacy

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Budget Input
Date: December 20, 2024 4:44:37 PM

Dear Victoria Legislative services,

I'm writing to add feedback, as requested for the 2025 City of Victoria Budget. Thank you for taking the time to read this email! I appreciate the hard work done by the city making Victoria a great place to live.

I generally support this budget, in particular a couple comments:

- I strongly support green transportation, especially the amazing work the city's been doing to improve cycling routes and safety. **Personal Privacy** where I regularly see negative impacts of climate change - I feel very proud living somewhere that is prioritizing low or no-greenhouse gas emission modes of transportation). I also strongly support the traffic calming, pedestrian improvements, etc proposed
- I also strongly support parks, libraries, housing and arts and culture. I'm looking forward to the last phases of Topaz park (pickleball, pathways, lighting). Given that it's going to be lit at night, it would be great to have a basketball court (there are so many people / young people that play at the court at Crystal Pool not too far away and it would be great if they had somewhere to keep playing after dark)
- While I really appreciate outdoor / public spaces, at this time I don't support the Centennial Square Revitalization project. The timing doesn't seem right, with other big projects underway (e.g. Topaz Park, potentially Crystal Pool, Government Street etc) paired with the large tax increases.

Cheers,
[Personal Privacy](#)

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Budget feedback
Date: December 23, 2024 8:24:14 AM

As a resident of Victoria, I would like to see more money directed to supporting a housing first model for people experiencing homelessness. Altogether, I would like to see much more going towards solutions to support people experiencing homelessness in our community. I don't support an increase in police budget. I don't think you're allocating funds where they need to be allocated to adequately or even moderately address the very real issue of homelessness in our city.

Personal Privacy

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Input on 2025 Draft Budget
Date: December 20, 2024 7:32:30 PM

Good evening,

I am writing Mayor and Council regarding the 2025 draft budget.

I am disappointed that the city is considering reducing service levels. In particular, things like climate initiatives, community events, public transit for youth, etc. should not be on the table without a fulsome analysis of the implications of such cuts by staff and without robust engagement with respect to each service with relevant community partners.

I urge Council to shy away from budget cuts without a full understanding of relevant information and implications.

Thank you,
Personal Privacy
Victoria

From: [Branden Sugden](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Draft Budget
Date: December 20, 2024 2:35:20 PM

Hello Mayor and Council,

I am writing to urge you not to reduce funding to the arts and culture sector as you consider the city's budget for 2025.

A decision to reduce investment in arts and culture related programs deteriorates the capacity of the arts community to contribute to current social issues. Arts and culture programs drive tourism and economic growth, and create a sense of community which improves mental health for our citizens. Arts and culture programs are an integral part of a healthy and resilient society.

Please continue to support Victoria's vibrant arts community.

Thank you,
Branden

Branden Sugden (he/him)
Interim Managing Director | Theatre SKAM
branden@skam.ca
P.O. box 8563, Victoria BC V8W 3S2
250-386-7526 ext. 6

Theatre SKAM lives, works, and creates on the traditional territory of the lək'wəŋən people. We acknowledge and respect the Songhees Nation and Xwsepsum Nation, whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

see what's happening at skam.ca

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Feedback on the 2025 Draft Budget
Date: December 23, 2024 8:24:24 AM

My one and only comment on the 2025 Budget - Why does VicPD need a \$80 million dollar budget? why do we essentially pay for 2 police services? (3 if you count us paying for the privilege of late night foot patrols) Why does it feel i see less and less enforcement on day to day problems but hear about things like VicPD finding 400 speeders in school zones and only handing out 35 tickets? Why have i seen more IRSU and bylaw officers on the streets in the past 3 months than VicPD when Bylaw is 1% of our budget? What, if any, actual benefits have we seen by VicPDs ever increasing budget?

All the same Problems are Here.

We're still inundated with people rat running down side streets at high speeds

We're mired in all the same problems we ahve been for years.

VicPD social media still tells people to call bylaw if they have problems with the homeless.

And now we have to cut social programs, community funds, programs /people depend on/ for what? The legal funds associated with consistently bungling high profile cases? Dal Manaks Retirement?

They can go to the province.

Enough is Enough.

Personal Privacy

From: [Executive Director](#)
To: [Legislative Services email; Victoria Mayor and Council](#)
Subject: Investment in Arts and Culture programs build capacity and development
Date: December 20, 2024 2:05:59 PM
Attachments: [Support-Arts-Culture_Open-Space-Arts-Society_Letter-of-Support_24-12-20.pdf](#)

Open Space Arts Society, with over 50 years of operation as a multidisciplinary arts organization in Victoria, is proud to be one of the few local professional non-profit arts societies that owns and operates its own building right here in Victoria. Our long-standing commitment to supporting artists and fostering creativity underscores the vital role arts and culture play in shaping a vibrant, inclusive, and resilient community. You have generously supported us over the years, and we urge the Council to continue prioritizing contributions to arts and culture programs in the upcoming 2025-2029 Budget.

Reducing investment in arts and culture programs will weaken the ability of the arts community to address and contribute meaningfully to pressing social issues. We all know the impact that arts have on the citizens of Victoria, as was demonstrated by the role arts took on during the pandemic. Arts and culture initiatives are proven drivers of tourism and economic growth, critical supporters of mental health, and powerful creators of social cohesion. These programs are not ancillary; they are essential components of a healthy, resilient society.

The City of Victoria has built an impressive and commendable legacy of supporting arts and culture. Your investments have enriched audiences and artists alike, through the recent purchase of a music venue, the funding for festivals and music strategy projects, fostered community development through neighborhood grants, and elevated recognition and celebration through initiatives like the ProArt Awards, Butler and Children's Book Prizes, and the Poet Laureate programs. We deeply appreciate your leadership and dedication to these efforts—our community thrives because of them.

We understand the need for Council to make responsible and informed financial decisions, particularly in an era that may lean toward fiscal conservatism. However, as we navigate this challenging period, it is crucial to reaffirm and strengthen your commitment to arts and culture. This will ensure the continued capacity of the sector to inspire resilience, foster innovation, and demonstrate that the City of Victoria values arts and culture as a central pillar of its municipal identity—not a luxury.

We encourage you to continue leading by example and maintain your current levels of support and investment in arts and culture programs in the 2025–2029 Financial Plan. This commitment will reinforce Victoria's reputation as a forward-thinking city that champions creativity, diversity, and the well-being of its community.

Letter addressed to Mayor and Council attached.

--

Doug Jarvis (he/him)
Executive Director
Open Space Arts Society
510 Fort Street, 2nd Floor
Victoria, BC V8W 1E6



[openspace.ca](https://www.openspace.ca)
250.383.8833

Open Space respectfully acknowledges that it sits on ləkʷəŋən land.



December 20, 2024

RE: Support Arts and Culture

Dear Mayor & Council;

Open Space Arts Society, with over 50 years of operation as a multidisciplinary arts organization in Victoria, is proud to be one of the few local professional non-profit arts societies that owns and operates its own building right here in Victoria. Our long-standing commitment to supporting artists and fostering creativity underscores the vital role arts and culture play in shaping a vibrant, inclusive, and resilient community. You have generously supported us over the years, and we urge the Council to continue prioritizing contributions to arts and culture programs in the upcoming 2025-2029 Budget.

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Sincerely,

Doug Jarvis
Executive Director
Open Space Arts Society
510 Fort Street, 2nd Floor
Victoria, BC V8W 1E6
director@openspace.ca

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Draft 2025 Budget
Date: December 20, 2024 11:12:07 PM

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this matter. The City has difficult choices to make. I appreciate the high quality of service that City staff provide.

1. It appears Council is aware of the need to consider the potential cost of the Crystal Pool project in their deliberations. This is an important amenity.
2. The proposal for the redesign of Centennial Square seems too expensive in our current circumstances and competes with important real needs. There are other splash parks in Greater Victoria and lots of accessible waterfront. This design should be reconsidered. Perhaps with this sort of proposal, in the future, the City should consider a dollar matching to see if citizens & businesses are willing to contribute & if not, cancel. Not the same, but something like the proposed Vancouver Art Gallery.
4. For appropriate City amenities try to encourage donations, for example, determine if more tree plantings, playground equipment could be paid for as memorials. I recall that in the past some jurisdictions [CRD parks??] were running out of appropriate locations for memorial benches, even though most or all of the cost was donated.
3. In my opinion, policing costs need to be kept under control.
4. A longer term potential revenue source: I suggest the City encourage collaboration among all relevant jurisdictions to initiate a per cruise ship passenger contribution [as is being done in other parts of the world] to be directed to assisting the unhoused in Victoria. This might reduce the need for policing and bylaw enforcement costs.

thank you
regards

Personal Privacy

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Reject the 2025 Police Budget
Date: December 23, 2024 8:24:18 AM

Hello,

I am a citizen and resident of Victoria writing to urge you to reconsider the proposed 2025 budget for our city, which doesn't reflect the needs of the people who are living here in the slightest.

I am begging you to not accept the Victoria Police Budget proposal - Our police force is already bloated, with 2.2 cops per 1000 residents, compared to the Canadian average of 1.8 cops per 1000. We do not need more cops on the streets in the middle of a housing crisis. Research shows that increasing police budgets do not have a direct impact on crime rates in cities. This funding should be going to community services, community centres, public libraries, and other social sector services that support inclusion, connection and belonging for people.

The proposed Police Budget is 5% higher than the Parks Rec and facilities (9%), VicFD (7%) and Library (2%) combined - which is frankly absurd and irresponsible. These funds should be moved into social infrastructure that meets the basic needs of our community members and targets the root source of crime. We don't need more cops displacing the homeless and harassing people on the streets. Victoria can do better, and NEEDS to do better for its people. The police force has failed time and time again - pumping more money into a broken system that perpetuates violence is not at all a solution.

Only 2% of the budget is being allocated to the Greater Victoria Library - we need more funds for the library and consider more funding to open it on Sundays.

- The Property Tax increase is 12% - this is really high but we do need funding for programs that the City provides - this could be lowered if the Police Budget is not accepted. We also shouldn't be cutting grant funding for a lot of different initiatives in order to minimize the property tax increase. This means less funding for arts and culture/non-profit event spaces, Festival Investment Grants, Victoria Music Strategy, Social Policy Equity and Diversity, Community Garden Volunteer Grants and My Great Neighbourhood Grant. Victoria keeps failing to provide funding for arts and culture, which is devastating to our community.

-

- The only people who want more cops are cops, so they can uphold their chokehold of power. This is unsustainable and will do more harm to Victoria that could ever be imagined. Displacing homeless people and turning Victoria into a police state does nothing.

-

- Thank you for taking the time to hear my plea, and again, as a citizen of this beautiful city, I am begging you to not accept the police budget proposal.

-

Personal Privacy

Subject: Protect Arts Funding: Act Now to Secure Victoria's Creative Future

Dear Members of Victoria City Council,

The time to act is now. Victoria's arts and music ecosystem—anchored by spaces like 780 Blanshard and groups like VIVAS and Haus of Owl—faces a critical moment. Programs like the Victoria Music Strategy Grant have transformed lives and empowered underrepresented voices. Cutting funding at this stage would destabilize these gains and waste the value of earlier investments.

I urge you to prioritize arts funding in your upcoming budget. Without it, we risk losing the very essence of what makes Victoria a vibrant, inclusive, and inspiring city.

Thank you for your leadership in this urgent matter.

Be well,
[Your Name]

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Feedback on budget increases
Date: December 20, 2024 12:50:40 PM

I am writing my feedback on the proposed property tax increases in Victoria. A 12% increase is not sustainable for those who are already pushed to the margins, average workers don't get raises of that much and in a city where the cost of living is already unattainable adding another cost to peoples pockets is not responsible governance.

I get that funding the city takes dollars however not all of these choices are necessary. A 10% increase to the police budget is way out of line with what I think is needed and actually just puts more pressure on those at the margins.

Let's build an inclusive city for those of all stations in life and one that celebrates our differences instead of clamping them down with police

[Personal Privacy](#)

From: [Geoff Murphy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Support for the arts community
Date: December 20, 2024 8:49:30 PM

Hello,

The intention of this email is to voice my support for the city of Victoria to dedicate more funding to our local arts community.

I'm a member of Haus of Owl, which is partnered with Vivas and we're based at 780 Blanshard St.

Haus of Owl provides me with an inclusive and vibrant community of fellow artists who have dedicated their life to developing their passion.

I hope that the city will continue to support the various communities of artists around our city.

Thank you for your time.

Geoff

Geoffrey Murphy

Creator of Opportunities | Insights | Happiness | Joy

Haus of Owl: Creation Lab

<https://hausofowl.com>

[@haus.of.owl](#) | [LinkedIn](#)

(m): 778-881-9134

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Support for the Arts in Victoria
Date: December 23, 2024 8:24:22 AM

I am writing to express my heartfelt support for the City of Victoria's arts funding and to encourage the continuation or expansion of these programs.

As a member of Haus of Owl, located at 780 Blanshard Street and partnered with Vivas, I have found an inclusive and inspiring space where artists like me can pursue our creative passions. This community not only nurtures individual growth but also enriches the broader cultural landscape of Victoria.

The arts are the lifeblood of our city, bringing people together, fostering innovation, and enhancing our quality of life. Increased funding ensures that spaces like Haus of Owl can continue to provide essential resources to artists and contribute to Victoria's vibrant identity.

Thank you for considering this investment in our shared future.

With gratitude,

[Personal Privacy](#)

From: [Isaac Thomas](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: proposed cuts to arts funding
Date: December 20, 2024 5:03:09 PM

Dear members of council

As an organization who has availed of the Cultural Infrastructure Grant, I cannot emphasize how critically important it is in this funding climate.

We get core operating grants, and we are scrimping and saving to combat inflation and sustain salaries for our staff. Funding bodies look to support projects, particularly new ones. But art and a cultural ecology builds, develops, and strengthens on sustainability. Infrastructure is critical to that sustainability. And our infrastructure supports local arts organizations by free and/or heavily discounted rental spaces, consultations, artistic support.

We are in a heritage building. We fully own it. Any renovation, retrofit, or development benefits the entire community, and is a *permanent* investment in our cultural ecology. We need infrastructure grants for arts spaces to do the unsexy work – roofing, lighting fixtures, bathrooms. Within all of this there is just simple painting of the building to ensure water does not leak in through the walls – which is profoundly boring but profoundly necessary – and rarely funded. Our expected building costs over the next 10 years is easily 10 million dollars. The Cultural Infrastructure Grant is a critical part of this plan. Please do not sacrifice it.

Please also reconsider other cuts to arts budgets specifically to Pro-Arts and SKAM.

With respect to Option 3 on pages 7 and 8 the reduction to the Pro Arts Awards and SKAM is setting a dangerous precedent to see the arts as something that is disposable. It is important to recognize all institutions in the artistic ecology in the city as being part of a whole. Cuts to one part of the sector eventually impact all others.

At the Belfry we are aware of our position as the flagship of theatre in the city. We cannot exist or grow locally without the sustained support and *existence* of other theatre organizations. As artists, technicians, and administrators are developed at smaller organizations they create a pipeline for hiring at larger organizations. Smaller organizations can use SKAM as a space to develop their art. Eventually they will use the Belfry, some may even be presented here – as we did Wonderheads. The arts sector in Victoria is already facing pressure from all levels of government as we are deemed not rural enough for provincial and federal funding. Decisions such as these, to cut arts funding to theatres, has a much larger ripple effect than the immediate benefit of a tax decrease.

A decision to reduce investment in arts and culture related programs deteriorates the capacity of the arts community to contribute to current social issues. Arts and culture programs drive tourism and economic growth, contribute to mental health, and create a sense of community. Arts and culture programs are an integral part of a healthy and resilient society.

I appreciate the delicate and complicated balance you are attempting to keep and merely

hope that your decision is clearly informed.

All the best
Isaac

Isaac Thomas (he/him)
Executive Director | [Belfry Theatre](#)
1291 Gladstone Avenue, Victoria, BC, V8T 1G5
T: 250-385-6835 ext. 232 E: Isaac.thomas@belfry.bc.ca

The Belfry Theatre is on the land of the Ləkʷəŋən People, known today as the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations. The Ləkʷəŋən people have been keepers of this land for millennia and we offer our respect and gratitude for our presence on this territory.

From: [Jordan Dack](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Supporting the Creative Community of Victoria
Date: December 20, 2024 8:43:02 PM

Dear Members of Victoria City Council,

Arts and music are the heart of our community. Spaces like 780 Blanshard and organizations such as VIVAS and Haus of Owl are essential to bringing people together, fostering collaboration, and amplifying the voices that make our city unique.

Programs like the Victoria Music Strategy Grant have empowered underrepresented groups, strengthening our social fabric and inspiring dialogue across our community. Cutting funding now would not only diminish the impact of past investments but also disrupt the community connections these programs have fostered.

I urge you to protect and prioritize arts funding to sustain the creative energy and community spirit that define Victoria.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Be well,
Jordan Dack
Haus of Owl Creation Lab, *Executive Director*
<https://hausofowl.com>

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Have Your Say : - Budget
Date: December 20, 2024 11:50:59 PM

I hope this message finds you well. As a concerned resident of Victoria, I am writing to express my thoughts on the city's budget for 2025. It is crucial that we manage the budget in a way that is sustainable and manageable for all residents. After reviewing the current budget, I believe there are several areas where we can make adjustments to keep the increase below 4% from 2024 levels. Additionally, we need detailed information on the expenditure on some of these programs, including where and to whom the money is going.

Here are my suggestions for review and potential trimming:

City Manager's Office: Evaluate the expenditures and identify areas for cost reduction.

Economic Development: Clarify the purpose and benefits of this program. Assess its impact and consider adjustments.

Victoria Conference Centre (VCC): Explore opportunities to increase profitability and efficiency.

Communication and Engagement: With a budget of \$3 million, it is essential to ensure this spending is efficient and impactful. A thorough review is necessary.

Parking, Lots, and Administration: The 15+% increase in this area seems excessive. A detailed analysis is needed to justify this rise.

Recreation, Library, and Bus Pass Programs: Re-evaluate these services to ensure they provide value to the community. Can they operate at greater cost recovery. We need to look if these services are benefiting a majority of residence. Maybe a survey on these areas will be useful.

People and Culture, and other Grants: With over \$5 million allocated, it is important to reassess this expenditure for potential savings.

Contingencies: While contingencies are important, we should explore alternative mechanisms to reduce the allocated amount.

By carefully reviewing these areas, we can identify opportunities to reduce costs without compromising essential services. It is vital that we prioritize spending that directly benefits the community and ensures long-term sustainability.

Thank you for considering my suggestions. I look forward to your response and am willing to participate in further discussions to achieve a balanced and manageable budget for 2025.

Personal Privacy

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Budget
Date: December 20, 2024 11:42:31 PM

Honourable Mayor and Members of Council,

The proposed tax increase of 12% is excessive, well above the current rate of inflation and will add considerably to the cost of living for average/lower income citizens, renters and small businesses in particular.

Given the many competing demands for limited municipal funds and the need to reduce tax increases below this figure, I wish to express my opposition to the proposed \$7.0 million capital expenditure for Phase 1 of the Centennial Square Revitalization Project. There is no defensible justification for this project which will benefit only the tiny fraction of the population who use water parks while destroying our cherished Centennial Fountain and Sequoia tree. Instead the project should be cancelled and the savings used to reduce the proposed tax increase in 2025 and thereafter.

Thank you for your consideration.

Personal Privacy

Victoria BC

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Subject: Preserving the Creative Vision of Victoria
Date: December 20, 2024 11:36:44 PM

Dear Members of Victoria City Council,

Victoria's future is brightest when creativity thrives. Spaces like 780 Blanshard and organizations such as VIVAS and Haus of Owl provide the foundation for our city's artistic innovation and cultural vibrancy. Through programs like the Victoria Music Strategy Grant, underrepresented voices have been empowered to tell their stories, enriching our shared identity.

Cutting funding now would destabilize this progress and weaken the impact of prior investments. It would risk losing the momentum that has positioned Victoria as a beacon of artistic excellence and inclusion.

Your continued support is essential to ensuring that the creative vision of Victoria remains strong. Together, we can build a future where the arts continue to inspire, connect, and uplift our community.

Thank you for championing the arts.

Best,
[Personal Privacy](#)

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Feedback on the budget
Date: December 20, 2024 9:16:22 PM

Hi there,
Something that I believe is missing from our city is outdoor spaces that are covered so that families could meet outside throughout the year, even when it's raining. I'm particularly thinking of Oaklands park and the park behind the Fernwood community centre. It would be great if there was a large gazebo or something that people could reserve for events such as birthday parties, fitness classes and other activities.

Thanks,

Personal Privacy

From: [Personal](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Input on 2025 Draft Budget
Date: December 23, 2024 8:24:38 AM

Hello,

I'm writing to provide comments on the 2025 Draft Budget. As a Victoria resident, I strongly support the spending proposed on new bike lanes (particularly protected and elevated bike lanes) and changes to our transportation infrastructure to make the roads safe (e.g., lowering speed limits, speed bumps, etc.). As a mom to two young kids, I am very concerned about the safety of our roads (particularly Hillside Ave. and Quadra St.) and reaching our climate goals. Roads were created for people and over the past century have been infiltrated by cars. I believe that any improvements should have people's needs and safety at the forefront, as opposed to what is convenient for cars. When you look at the likelihood of death in a collision at 50km/hr vs 30km/hr (80% chance of death vs. 90% chance of survival) it becomes clear that it is simply not worth having speeds above 30km/hr within the city. Especially since this is presumably higher for children. It is confusing reading op-eds about people who feel unsafe in downtown Victoria, yet have no safety concerns about using their car as their primary form of transportation, as violence on the road is much more common than violence on the streets. Additionally, increased spending on actually enforcing speed limits and ensuring the penalties are consequential is important to consider within the context of the budget as well. On a personal note, the new bike lanes have dramatically changed how much more cycling and walking my single car family travels (particularly the new Shelbourne St. lanes). It has also decreased our transportation costs as we are less dependent on our vehicle. I sincerely hope that the city is able to continue working with Saanich to create safe and cohesive bike networks in the region. Ultimately, we can't reach our climate goals in Victoria if we continue to promote car dependency.

It likely goes without saying, that I also strongly support more spending on climate action in general, densification, and improving/creating more public parks and green spaces, which are key to creating community in third spaces. Although I'm concerned the plan to create disposal stations that separate organics/recycling/garbage will be contaminated without a very strong communications plan, as well as thought as to how recycling can be cleaned if necessary before being thrown into the correct bin. Additionally, I support continued spending on our library programming as a seemingly small but important way to support climate goals and reduce living costs for people by providing free educational and entertainment materials, such as GVPL's wonderful storytime program for children.

Additionally, I support the budget's intention to spend on affordable housing, supporting the arts, and keeping the Victoria music scene alive.

Thanks for your time.

[Personal Privacy](#)

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Support for VIVAS
Date: December 20, 2024 5:22:53 PM

Hi there!

I am the program coordinator for the Ministry of Casual Living. I'd like to express my support of VIVAS and the 780 Blanshard building as a preserved art space. The building is home to Ministry of Casual Living, a local art non profit that has been going since '02. This space is an important pillar of the community. We throw art related events that are accessible to everyone, with free entry. Our relationships with other organizations in the space are fostered by being under one roof. Losing this space would be a great loss for us, for the other nonprofits and creative spaces in the building, for the artists who rent studio space with us, and for the community at large.

Thank you,
Leda Shields

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
Subject: 2025 Draft Budget Input: Increased Funding to Support Community Garden Programs
Date: December 23, 2024 8:24:22 AM
Attachments: [2025 Draft Budget Input Request for Increased Funding to Support Community Garden Programs .pdf](#)

Dear City Council,

As community garden coordinators and gardeners dedicated to fostering inclusive, sustainable, and empowering spaces for our community, we are advocating for a significant increase in funding for the Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator Grant and to revise its Terms of Reference.

Specifically, we are requesting:

1. Increase the funding cap per organization and allow applications on a per-garden basis.
2. Double the grants allocation from \$223,230 to \$446,460 for the 2025 City Budget.

The City of Victoria’s Strategic Plan, under the “Economic Health and Community Vitality” section, prioritizes initiatives that: “expand supports for urban agriculture, gardening, and food security and food sovereignty initiatives.” Strengthening support for community gardens is a practical, cost-effective way to achieve this strategic goal.

Community Impact of Community Gardens

Research consistently demonstrates that well-supported community gardens have a profound positive impact on urban communities, enhancing mental health, fostering social cohesion, and even reducing crime rates ([source](#)). Community gardens reduce social isolation by bringing people together from diverse backgrounds to form supportive networks where they can contribute to their communities. These gardens also serve as empowering gathering spaces for marginalized groups, such as the VIRCS Welcome Gardens, which provides newcomers and refugees a space for social connection, education, and access to culturally relevant foods.

Community gardens play a critical role in addressing rising food insecurity in Victoria. They offer access to fresh, local produce, and culturally relevant foods not readily available in grocery stores. These gardens empower people to take control of their food systems, fostering self-reliance, resilience, and improved physical health.

The City has already recognized the positive impact of community gardens in our communities by providing the “Community Garden Start-Up Grant” which supports the establishment of new gardens, and the “Volunteer Coordinator Grant” to enable neighbourhood organizations to sustain and manage these projects with volunteer support.

Volunteer Coordinator Grant Shortfalls

The \$10,000 annual cap per organization provided by the Volunteer Coordinator grant has remained unchanged since 2018, despite a 21% rise in inflation and the rising costs of maintaining and expanding community garden programs. At the same time, demand for community gardens has surged since 2018. From 2019-2023 there has been:

- 60% increase in community gardens
- 12 new community gardens built on City land: 4 allotment gardens and 8 commons gardens.
- 9 new fruit trees planted in community orchards (6 in Oaklands at Oswald Community Garden; 3 in Fernwood at Alexander Park).
- Demand for community garden plots have increased enormously. For example, at Yates Street Community Garden, 40 people joined the waitlist in 2018, 71 in 2019 and 121 in 2021 - representing a 203% increase from 2018 to 2021.

Volunteer burnout remains a significant challenge, and coordinators are tasked with managing volunteer turnover, integrating equity and inclusion practices, and managing increasingly complex projects.

Under the current Terms of Reference, organizations managing multiple community gardens are limited to a maximum of \$10,000 annually, regardless of the number of gardens they oversee. This policy discourages organizations from coordinating multiple garden projects, which could otherwise benefit from shared resources and economies of scale.

While the current funding allocation represents a solid starting point, it falls short of what is needed to fully realize the potential of these initiatives. Increasing support for the Volunteer Coordinator Grant is essential to ensuring the sustainability and continued success of community garden programs across Victoria.

Advancing Equity and Anti-Racism in Community Gardens in Greater Victoria

Food insecurity continues to disproportionately affect Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour (IBPOC) communities in Greater Victoria, reflecting national trends. Nationally, food insecurity rates for Indigenous and Black households are 28.2% and 28.9%, respectively, compared to 12.4% among

white households.

Although specific local data for Greater Victoria is limited, it is evident that IBPOC communities experience similar inequities. Contributing factors include systemic racism, economic disparities, and limited access to culturally appropriate foods.

On November 18, 2024, the Community Garden Roundtable, hosted by Welcome Gardens and the Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CRFAIR), brought together key stakeholders to discuss these challenges. It was acknowledged that systemic racism and discrimination pervade many facets of society, including community gardens. This reality disproportionately impacts historically equity-denied groups, such as Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour, as well as 2SLGBTQI+ individuals, in accessing community garden spaces equitably.

The discussions at the roundtable underscored significant gaps in existing programs and highlighted the urgent need to strengthen food security and gardening initiatives for all community members.

Community garden coordinators have demonstrated a strong commitment to addressing these issues by identifying and bridging gaps in programming and policies to advance equity and anti-racism. However, achieving these goals requires additional resources. The City of Victoria, known for its commitment to equity, accessibility, and anti-racism, is urged to provide enhanced support. This includes funding frameworks, training programs, and actionable measures to foster inclusivity in community gardens.

The current funding, provided through the Community Coordinator Grant, is insufficient to meet the growing demands of this critical work. Coordinators are experiencing significant burnout as they navigate numerous challenges while striving to uphold these vital initiatives. Increased municipal support is essential to ensure the sustainability and success of these efforts.

Our Recommendations

1.

Amend the Terms of Reference for the Volunteer Coordinator Grant

Increase the funding cap per organization, allow organizations managing multiple projects to apply for additional funding, and review the policy through an equity lens to make recommendations for how to effectively allocate this funding into the future. The current \$10,000 cap per organization is outdated, failing to account for inflation and the growing demand for community garden programs, especially for organizations coordinating multiple garden projects. This limitation disincentivizes the coordination of multiple garden projects, which could otherwise share resources and operate more efficiently.

2.

Double the Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator Grant Allocation

Increase the overall funding allocation for the Volunteer Coordinator Grant from \$223,230 to \$446,460. This would allow community gardens to scale up their programs by funding additional staff hours, offering more educational opportunities, and implementing much-needed EDI initiatives.

3.

Redistribute Funds from the Victoria Police Department Budget

In the spirit of equity and reconciliation, and in acknowledgment of the historic([source](#)) and ongoing([source](#)) harm caused by policing to IBPOC communities, we urge the City Council to consider reallocating a small portion (0.33%) of the proposed 2025 police budget to community-based initiatives including the Community Gardens Volunteer Coordinator Grant. The proposed police budget accounts for 23% of the total City budget – 8% more than Parks & Recreation, Community Development, and the Public Library budgets combined. We are not advocating for cuts to other essential community services, but rather for a fairer redistribution of funding.

The growing body of research shows that increasing police funding does not directly correlate to reduced crime, whereas investing in community services, recreation, and social programs—including community gardens—has been shown to lower crime rates and support community well-being([source](#)). Investing in community gardens offers a proactive, sustainable strategy to build safer, healthier neighborhoods.

Implications of Not Addressing Shortfalls

If the key amendments to the Terms of Reference and the proposed budget allocation are not made, community garden programs risk becoming unsustainable, jeopardizing the many benefits they provide to Victoria’s residents. This also threatens the City’s investment in numerous gardens established through the “Community Garden Start-Up Grant.” Volunteer burnout will continue to rise, reducing the capacity to maintain gardens and engage with diverse community members. Those who rely on these spaces may lose access to vital opportunities for connection, cultural expression, and food security.

By failing to adequately invest in these programs, the City risks not only stalling progress on its strategic priorities related to urban agriculture and food sovereignty but also weakening a proven, community-driven response to pressing social and economic challenges.

Call to Action

We urge the City of Victoria to acknowledge the profound impact community gardens have on our city and the critical need for adequate support. By amending the Terms of Reference, doubling the

Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator grant, and reallocating a portion of the police budget, the City can ensure that these vital spaces continue to foster strong, resilient, and inclusive communities.

Thank you for considering this request. We look forward to working together to strengthen the future of community gardens in Victoria.

Sincerely,

Personal Privacy

December 20, 2024

Dear City Council,

As community garden coordinators and gardeners dedicated to fostering inclusive, sustainable, and empowering spaces for our community, we are advocating for a significant increase in funding for the Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator Grant and to revise its Terms of Reference. Specifically, we are requesting:

1. Increase the funding cap per organization and allow applications on a per-garden basis.
2. Double the grants allocation from \$223,230 to \$446,460 for the 2025 City Budget.

The City of Victoria's Strategic Plan, under the "Economic Health and Community Vitality" section, prioritizes initiatives that: "expand supports for urban agriculture, gardening, and food security and food sovereignty initiatives." Strengthening support for community gardens is a practical, cost-effective way to achieve this strategic goal.

Community Impact of Community Gardens

Research consistently demonstrates that well-supported community gardens have a profound positive impact on urban communities, enhancing mental health, fostering social cohesion, and even reducing crime rates ([source](#)). Community gardens reduce social isolation by bringing people together from diverse backgrounds to form supportive networks where they can contribute to their communities. These gardens also serve as empowering gathering spaces for marginalized groups, such as the VIRCS Welcome Gardens, which provides newcomers and refugees a space for social connection, education, and access to culturally relevant foods.

Community gardens play a critical role in addressing rising food insecurity in Victoria. They offer access to fresh, local produce, and culturally relevant foods not readily available in grocery stores. These gardens empower people to take control of their food systems, fostering self-reliance, resilience, and improved physical health.

The City has already recognized the positive impact of community gardens in our communities by providing the "Community Garden Start-Up Grant" which supports the establishment of new gardens, and the "Volunteer Coordinator Grant" to enable neighbourhood organizations to sustain and manage these projects with volunteer support.

Volunteer Coordinator Grant Shortfalls

The \$10,000 annual cap per organization provided by the Volunteer Coordinator grant has remained unchanged since 2018, despite a 21% rise in inflation and the rising costs of maintaining and expanding community garden programs. At the same time, demand for community gardens has surged since 2018. From 2019-2023 there has been:

- 60% increase in community gardens
- 12 new community gardens built on City land: 4 allotment gardens and 8 commons gardens.
- 9 new fruit trees planted in community orchards (6 in Oaklands at Oswald Community Garden; 3 in Fernwood at Alexander Park).
- Demand for community garden plots have increased enormously. For example, at Yates Street Community Garden, 40 people joined the waitlist in 2018, 71 in 2019 and 121 in 2021 - representing a 203% increase from 2018 to 2021.

Volunteer burnout remains a significant challenge, and coordinators are tasked with managing volunteer turnover, integrating equity and inclusion practices, and managing increasingly complex projects.

Under the current Terms of Reference, organizations managing multiple community gardens are limited to a maximum of \$10,000 annually, regardless of the number of gardens they oversee. This policy discourages organizations from coordinating multiple garden projects, which could otherwise benefit from shared resources and economies of scale.

While the current funding allocation represents a solid starting point, it falls short of what is needed to fully realize the potential of these initiatives. Increasing support for the Volunteer Coordinator Grant is essential to ensuring the sustainability and continued success of community garden programs across Victoria.

Advancing Equity and Anti-Racism in Community Gardens in Greater Victoria

Food insecurity continues to disproportionately affect Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour (IBPOC) communities in Greater Victoria, reflecting national trends. Nationally, food insecurity rates for Indigenous and Black households are 28.2% and 28.9%, respectively, compared to 12.4% among white households.

Although specific local data for Greater Victoria is limited, it is evident that IBPOC communities experience similar inequities. Contributing factors include systemic racism, economic disparities, and limited access to culturally appropriate foods.

On November 18, 2024, the Community Garden Roundtable, hosted by Welcome Gardens and the Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CRFAIR), brought together key stakeholders to discuss these challenges. It was acknowledged that systemic racism and discrimination pervade many facets of society, including community gardens. This reality disproportionately impacts historically equity-denied groups, such as Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour, as well as 2SLGBTQI+ individuals, in accessing community garden spaces equitably.

The discussions at the roundtable underscored significant gaps in existing programs and highlighted the urgent need to strengthen food security and gardening initiatives for all community members.

Community garden coordinators have demonstrated a strong commitment to addressing these issues by identifying and bridging gaps in programming and policies to advance equity and anti-racism. However, achieving these goals requires additional resources. The City of Victoria, known for its commitment to equity, accessibility, and anti-racism, is urged to provide enhanced support. This includes funding frameworks, training programs, and actionable measures to foster inclusivity in community gardens.

The current funding, provided through the Community Coordinator Grant, is insufficient to meet the growing demands of this critical work. Coordinators are experiencing significant burnout as they navigate numerous challenges while striving to uphold these vital initiatives. Increased municipal support is essential to ensure the sustainability and success of these efforts.

Our Recommendations

1. Amend the Terms of Reference for the Volunteer Coordinator Grant

Increase the funding cap per organization, allow organizations managing multiple projects to apply for additional funding, and review the policy through an equity lens to make recommendations for how to effectively allocate this funding into the future. The current \$10,000 cap per organization is outdated, failing to account for inflation and the growing demand for community garden programs, especially for organizations coordinating multiple garden projects. This limitation disincentivizes the coordination of multiple garden projects, which could otherwise share resources and operate more efficiently.

2. Double the Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator Grant Allocation

Increase the overall funding allocation for the Volunteer Coordinator Grant from \$223,230 to \$446,460. This would allow community gardens to scale up their programs by funding additional staff hours, offering more educational opportunities, and implementing much-needed EDI initiatives.

3. **Redistribute Funds from the Victoria Police Department Budget**

In the spirit of equity and reconciliation, and in acknowledgment of the historic ([source](#)) and ongoing ([source](#)) harm caused by policing to IBPOC communities, we urge the City Council to consider reallocating a small portion (0.33%) of the proposed 2025 police budget to community-based initiatives including the Community Gardens Volunteer Coordinator Grant. The proposed police budget accounts for 23% of the total City budget – 8% more than Parks & Recreation, Community Development, and the Public Library budgets combined. We are not advocating for cuts to other essential community services, but rather for a fairer redistribution of funding. The growing body of research shows that increasing police funding does not directly correlate to reduced crime, whereas investing in community services, recreation, and social programs—including community gardens—has been shown to lower crime rates and support community well-being ([source](#)). Investing in community gardens offers a proactive, sustainable strategy to build safer, healthier neighborhoods.

Implications of Not Addressing Shortfalls

If the key amendments to the Terms of Reference and the proposed budget allocation are not made, community garden programs risk becoming unsustainable, jeopardizing the many benefits they provide to Victoria’s residents. This also threatens the City’s investment in numerous gardens established through the “Community Garden Start-Up Grant.” Volunteer burnout will continue to rise, reducing the capacity to maintain gardens and engage with diverse community members. Those who rely on these spaces may lose access to vital opportunities for connection, cultural expression, and food security.

By failing to adequately invest in these programs, the City risks not only stalling progress on its strategic priorities related to urban agriculture and food sovereignty but also weakening a proven, community-driven response to pressing social and economic challenges.

Call to Action

We urge the City of Victoria to acknowledge the profound impact community gardens have on our city and the critical need for adequate support. By amending the Terms of Reference, doubling the Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator grant, and reallocating a portion of the police budget, the City can ensure that these vital spaces continue to foster strong, resilient, and inclusive communities.

Thank you for considering this request. We look forward to working together to strengthen the future of community gardens in Victoria.

Sincerely,

Personal Privacy

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Re: 2025 Draft Budget
Date: December 20, 2024 6:04:10 PM

A decision to reduce investment in arts and culture related programs deteriorates the capacity of the arts community to contribute to current social issues. Arts and culture programs drive tourism and economic growth, contribute to mental health, and create a sense of community. Arts and culture programs are an integral part of a healthy and resilient society.

[Personal Privacy](#)

Victoria Resident

From: [Matthew Payne](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: feedback on budget 2025
Date: December 20, 2024 9:50:23 PM

Folks,

A decision to reduce investment in arts and culture related programs deteriorates the capacity of the arts community to contribute to current social issues. Arts and culture programs drive tourism and economic growth, contribute to mental health, and create a sense of community. Arts and culture programs are an integral part of a healthy and resilient society.

When the provincial Liberal party cut arts funding in BC by 50% about 15 years ago, the community protested and the media responded with several articles:

<https://bcliving.ca/entertainment/arts/arts-funding-slashed/>

<https://theyee.ca/News/2009/09/28/ArtsCuts/print.html>

<https://www.straight.com/article-295673/vancouver/arts-alliance-says-bc-budget-cuts-arts-funding-liberals-cover-it-including-museum-funds-grand-total#>

Thanks,
Matthew

--

Matthew Payne
Artistic and Executive Director
The Other Guise Theatre Company

From: [Ministry of Casual Living](#)
To: [Legislative Services email; Victoria Mayor and Council](#)
Subject: Commitment to Arts and Culture programs demonstrates value
Date: December 20, 2024 2:06:40 PM
Attachments: [Commitment-Arts-Culture_Ministry-of-Casual-Living_Letter-of-Support_24-12-20.pdf](#)

The Ministry of Casual Living (MoCL) has spent decades creating opportunities for artists and fostering a thriving, grassroots arts community here in Victoria. We're one of the few artist-run spaces in town that provides consistent, accessible support to local creators, and we see every day how vital arts and culture are to the health of our city.

The MoCL is a tenant in the 780 Blanshard Arts Building. We are one of the anchor organizations and along with our colleagues, value the concentration and community that has developed through our tenancy in this building. We appreciate the work that VIVAS has done to advocate for, and continue to pursue affordable rent options for our organization and the community of artists whom we support through our own programs and studio rentals. We wholeheartedly support VIVAS and their efforts to protect and preserve arts spaces in Victoria. Our vibrant arts hub really needs the City's support in the coming years.

The MoCL's existence itself is evidence that municipal support to arts and culture programs is a proven benefit to emerging artists, collectives and organizations in Victoria. Many of us have gotten a start through a My Great Neighbourhood Grant, or more recently a Victoria Music Strategy funded project. We're asking you to keep arts and culture funding a priority in the next budget. Cutting back now would hit the community hard, just when creativity and connection are most needed. Arts programs bring people together, improve mental health, drive tourism, and make Victoria the vibrant, exciting place we all love. And arts buildings and facilities are an integral part of this work.

The City does a lot to support the arts—festivals, neighborhood grants, awards, the Poet Laureate program, and more. It's amazing work, and it makes a real difference. Let's not lose that momentum. Keep funding the arts and show that Victoria values creativity as a key part of our city's identity and future. A positive gesture towards maintaining arts support will go a long way.

Letter addressed to Mayor and Council attached.

--

Ministry of Casual Living
ministryofcasualiving.ca



Ministry of Casual Living

Mayor and Council
City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square
Victoria, B.C. V8W 1P6

December 20, 2024

RE: Commitment to Arts and Culture

Dear Mayor & Council;

The Ministry of Casual Living (MoCL) has spent decades creating opportunities for artists and fostering a thriving, grassroots arts community here in Victoria. We're one of the few artist-run spaces in town that provides consistent, accessible support to local creators, and we see every day how vital arts and culture are to the health of our city.

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The City does a lot to support the arts—festivals, neighborhood grants, awards, the Poet Laureate program, and more. It's amazing work, and it makes a real difference. Let's not lose that momentum. Keep funding the arts and show that Victoria values creativity as a key part of our city's identity and future. A positive gesture towards maintaining arts support will go a long way.

All the best,

Board of Directors

Ministry of Casual Living
750 Fairfield Rd.
780 Blanshard Arts Building
Victoria, BC

From: [ProArt Alliance](#)
To: [Legislative Services email; Victoria Mayor and Council](#)
Subject: Arts and Culture programs are a vital part of a healthy and resilient society
Date: December 20, 2024 1:04:39 PM
Attachments: [Arts-Culture-Programs_City-of-Victoria_ProArt-Alliance_24-12-20.pdf](#)

On behalf of the ProArt Alliance of Greater Victoria members and associated communities, we are encouraging Victoria City Council to continue to support contributions to arts and culture related programs in the upcoming budget.

A decision to reduce investment in arts and culture related programs deteriorates the capacity of the arts community to contribute to current social issues. Arts and culture programs drive tourism and economic growth, contribute to mental health, and create a sense of community. Arts and culture programs are an integral part of a healthy and resilient society.

The City of Victoria is building an incredible portfolio of support and investment in arts and culture programs; that benefit audiences through festivals and music strategy funding, community development through neighbourhood grants, and recognition, acknowledgement and celebration through the ProArt Awards, the Butler and Children's book prizes and the Poet Laureate programs. Thank you for this! We all benefit from your commitment to sustainable arts and culture investment and support.

We know that Council needs to make responsible and well informed financial decisions. As society prepares for austerity and a phase of fiscal conservatism, it is important to bolster your commitment to the arts and culture programs to maintain capacity, inspire resilience. Demonstrate that the City of Victoria does not perceive the arts as a luxury, but that you value arts and culture as a core aspect of municipal operations.

We encourage you to continue to be leaders in the region and maintain your current levels of support and investment in arts and culture programs in the 2025-2029 Financial Plan.

Letter addressed to Mayor and Council attached.

--

Doug Jarvis
Administrator
ProArt Alliance of Greater Victoria
info@proartalliance.ca
www.proartalliance.ca
1609 Blanshard St., Unit B
Victoria, BC V8W 2J5

Mayor and Council
City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square
Victoria, B.C. V8W 1P6

December 20, 2024

Re: **2025-2029 Draft Financial Plan – Tax Increase Reduction Options**

Dear Mayor and Council;

On behalf of the ProArt Alliance of Greater Victoria members and associated communities, we are encouraging Victoria City Council to continue to support contributions to arts and culture related programs in the upcoming budget.

A decision to reduce investment in arts and culture related programs deteriorates the capacity of the arts community to contribute to current social issues. Arts and culture programs drive tourism and economic growth, contribute to mental health, and create a sense of community. Arts and culture programs are an integral part of a healthy and resilient society.

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We know that Council needs to make responsible and well informed financial decisions. As society prepares for austerity and a phase of fiscal conservatism, it is important to bolster your commitment to the arts and culture programs to maintain capacity, inspire resilience. Demonstrate that the City of Victoria does not perceive the arts as a luxury, but that you value arts and culture as a core aspect of municipal operations.

We encourage you to continue to be leaders in the region and maintain your current levels of support and investment in arts and culture programs in the 2025-2029 Financial Plan.

Sincerely,



Doug Jarvis
Administrator

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Draft Budget Feedback
Date: December 20, 2024 12:03:07 PM

Dear Victoria City Council,

I do not support the city cutting property tax increases as much as possible at the expense of city services and programs. I have read through the options that were presented at the Dec 12 meeting, and even the 7% one is rather grim. At the lower end, something like eliminating \$10,000 for the Butler and *Children's* Book Prizes just seems petty and cheap. I would maybe consider the cost of the negative PR from things like that.

If the city is going to be approving thousands of units of housing, as it should be, then it has an obligation to provide the amenities that make it a city worth living in. People who will live in the many new apartment buildings don't have yards and garages. They depend on city parks, public spaces and programs being accessible and maintained. People who live without cars in the car-free buildings (that's me!) need reliable, affordable transit options, like the youth bus pass and safe multimodal infrastructure, to get to and from work and everything else in life. (Can council add lobbying the province to up the free transit pass age to 18 in their upcoming budget? A better way to save the city that money.)

If there is an affordability crisis, is it fair to raise recreation fees for those who can generally least afford it rather than raising property taxes for those who already have more equity in their homes and properties? Should we be getting rid of free programs in RAP when many people can't afford to take their kids anywhere else right now? Food is one of the main drivers of the current cost of living crisis, and the city is considering getting rid of the Get Growing program, which helps residents become more food secure. Super depressing. Even the max 7% proposal cuts the equity, inclusion and accessibility grant, something that presumably would make our city safer, and the music strategy, something that makes it worth living in, especially at a time when the arts are struggling to find space and program funding.

Some options I support are: reducing some reserve contributions, reducing staff-identified contracted services, extending the debt repayment timeline, scaling back Canada Day celebrations (unless other municipalities and/or levels of government will contribute more to the event and its policing costs), eliminating vacant positions that the city can manage without and that won't mess up future capacity needs, and a different funding relationship with SIPP. I'm actually okay with scaling back the EV infrastructure if the province and private operators are starting to fill that role. We should be focusing less on personal vehicles inside the city anyways. I'm sure there are some staff-identified programs and services that can be streamlined, but hopefully we learned from the pandemic that some redundancy is essential.

Even though the police budget increase is being considered separately, these proposed cuts cannot be considered outside of the context of continued massive annual increases to the police budget. It is disheartening that we have to consider cutting things for underserved city residents--things that make the city safer, healthier and more prosocial--while the police board considers it an affront to be asked to scale down their requests. And yes, I watched their budget presentation and have followed their board meetings about the budget.

In short, I hope you will vote to continue funding the things that make this a wonderful city

I'm proud to live in. There is a lot of darkness in the world right now, and the steps we've taken to approve housing, build multimodal networks and improve public spaces are a bright spot for me. It would be sad to see some of that dimmed.

Personal Privacy

December 20, 2024

2025 City of Victoria Draft Budget Commentary

Submission from the Ralmax Group of Companies

Contact: Gary Bartlett, Chief Operating Officer

This feedback is respectfully submitted on behalf of the Ralmax Group of Companies with the intention of helping the City of Victoria get back on the pathway to fiscal responsibility in its spending and growth priorities.

The Ralmax Group has enjoyed many years of growth and success because:

- We pay particular attention to ensuring we are delivering value to our customers in the products and services we provide.
- We are attentive to the cost of our products and services, ensuring we are efficient in our operations and eliminate waste at every opportunity.
- We constantly challenge our business assumptions and ensure we are in-step with the market.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the City of Victoria. We understand the complexities of operating in a multi-stakeholder environment and that fiscal responsibility is not the exclusive domain of businesses; the same disciplines would be well applied to the city budget and planning process. As a significant contributor to the property tax revenues of the city, we have seen our property taxes more than double over the past four years, notionally this has been necessary to keep pace with the rate of spending desired by the city. It is abundantly clear to us (as it is for many of the city's industrial and commercial taxpayers), that this level of taxation is unsustainable and, if left unchecked, will result in business failures and/or significant migration to lower taxing jurisdictions. The resulting loss of tax revenues and well-paying jobs will undoubtedly contribute to accelerating the debt spiral that the city is experiencing. As a further note of caution, our economy on the provincial and federal level is entering a period of uncertainty and instability. Given that BC is primarily a resource economy which is significantly exposed to global trade disruption due to tariffs and embargoes, this is not a time of optimism and growth. Fiscal restraint and discipline are necessary.

We draw our information from the December 4/24 "*2025-2029 Draft Financial Plan – Tax Increase Reduction Options*" submitted to the Committee of the Whole by Susanne Thompson, Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer.

In this document, Ms. Thompson identifies four options where cost reductions (ranging from 4% to 7%) may be achieved in the current and future budgets. This work identifies workable options which follow the principles outlined in the Council resolution and are aligned with priorities identified by a prior Ipsos public survey. The resulting analysis identifies specific areas where future costs may be contained. We embrace the recommendations contained in Option 4, specifically as follows:

1. **Staff and Contract Service Adjustments:** The report identifies \$1.56 million in 2025 cost savings related to suppressing new positions and a further two-year savings of \$2.472 million related to eliminating vacant positions and reducing contracted services. It is prudent for the city to apply this type of discipline to its staffing.
2. **Scaling back on multi-modal corridors:** The current program of adding bike lanes to the City has resulted in a loss of parking, loss of vehicle access options, and has added “friction” to visitors to the city’s businesses through increased traffic congestion. The report identifies \$965k in potential savings through scaling back planned initiatives in 2025 along with a further \$535k in 2026. We would propose a two-year moratorium on new bike lanes and to let the citizens of Victoria decide what the best approach to bike lanes would be as part of the next municipal election. In the interim, the \$1.5 million in savings would make a significant contribution to fiscal responsibility.
3. **Scaling back on EV Charging Stations:** It is unclear how the city has found itself in the business of installing EV charging stations since this need, when it occurs, can and will be addressed by private industry. Apart from the two-year cost savings of \$1.537 million identified in the report from scaling back this program, it is conceivable that the city might turn this into a revenue opportunity by leasing the sidewalk/parking space needed by charging stations to private companies.
4. **Reducing community grants:** The report identifies that the city has attained the highest per capita grant expenditure in comparison to other BC municipalities, further contributing to an unsustainable spending pattern. The report identifies \$1.546 million in grant reduction opportunities, in many cases to avoid duplication of funding with provincial programs.
5. **Eliminating Youth Bus Passes:** The report identifies \$630k in savings (in 2026) related to this program. This should be acted upon as soon as practically possible. While a great program, it is not the responsibility of the City of Victoria, but rather BC Transit and the Province.

Further savings were identified in this report related to adjustments in contributions to reserve accounts. These should be implemented when deemed most appropriate by city staff, we would not want to impair current assets and properties through poor maintenance or upkeep and see the need for prudent decision making in this respect.

In conclusion, it is essential that the City regain control of profligate spending programs and return to more disciplined and sustainable program spending. We would like to see the City get to a point where it can keep its annual increases within the bounds of annual inflation and cost of living indexes. While we think that, with some probing, you can actually do better than a 4% tax increase, in the current environment, a 4% tax increase is a good start towards a better future.

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Draft budget - Citizen feedback
Date: December 20, 2024 10:44:55 AM

Hello,

As a resident of the city of Victoria I wanted to offer my feedback on the 2025 Draft budget.

Each year police spending in this city increases. Yet the city is still plagued by the same problems, and nothing changes. I think it is absurd that there is more funding dedicated to the VicPD in the 2025 budget than any other single cause. Clearly increasing police presence is not achieving measurable results, and this money - my money as a taxpayer - would be much better spent on pretty much anything else.

For instance -

Homeless shelters. Social programs. Childcare. Parks and public spaces. Supporting arts & culture. Warming & cooling centres for extreme weather. Safe consumption sites/drug testing centres. Increasing cycling infrastructure. To name a few.

When police officers on the island are routinely in the news for misconduct and their own illegal activities, and when the streets of Victoria remain unsafe for its citizens (including the unhoused population, who are citizens as well, and who regularly experience violence at the hands of police officers), I do not think the city should be dedicating so much money to their funding. I do not consent to my tax dollars being used this way.

Thanks for your time,

Personal Privacy

Victoria, BC
[Personal Privacy](#)

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 budget input
Date: December 23, 2024 8:24:04 AM

Hello! I am writing to express my concern about the proposed increased budget for bylaw and police officers. I think that the city should be investing more money in harm reduction services, as well as community organizations who help to keep the unhoused population safe, as well as addressing the needs for bigger-picture changes such as affordable housing options.

By-law and police officers do nothing to help the unhoused population; rather, they aggravate the problems they are already facing. Sweeps are not going to help the unhoused become housed, nor will they appease the general population or help to “beautify” the downtown core. By addressing a symptom and not the cause, the city is wasting millions of dollars.

This money could be better used in helping to fund affordable housing options & grants for non-profits specializing in harm reduction & community crisis response (such as the Community-led Crisis Response Team at AVI Health & Community services).

Thank you for your consideration

Personal Privacy

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 budget support
Date: December 20, 2024 12:04:50 PM

Hello, I am writing today to express my gratitude for all the safe bike infrastructure in Victoria that has been put in place these past few years. My ^{Pers} year old has been able to bike safely from our house that borders Saanich and Victoria all the way downtown using protected bike lanes and the Galloping Goose. Please continue to invest in bike lanes as my family loves to use them! I also appreciate the pedestrian infrastructure that is put in place, I feel much safer walking in Victoria than I do Saanich, who is a bit behind with sidewalk infrastructure.

Thank you!

Personal Privac

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Comments on the 2025 Budget
Date: December 23, 2024 8:24:11 AM

Hello Mayor, Council and City of Victoria Staff:

I am writing today even though I am pretty much cynically convinced that my comments will have little to no influence over you. **Personal Privacy**
To say I am disappointed in your performance over the last 2 years is an understatement - but that's not what this email is about.

Rather I am asking you to look at the budget you have drafted through the following lenses:

1. Are you doing the RIGHT THING with the way the city's money has been allocated - for example, research has shown that using police for call outs that involve people experiencing a mental health crisis (particularly racialized individuals) can lead to negative outcomes for those experiencing the crisis and here in Victoria we have the Community Led Crisis Response team (CLCR - <https://avi.org/service/clcr/>) as an alternative - why not try allocating more funding to initiatives like this rather than continuing to increase the budget of a police force that is ill-suited and woefully undertrained to respond to mental health crisis calls and other calls involving marginalized and vulnerable community members
2. Are you doing the HUMAN RIGHTS ALIGNED THING - when we bring banners that say 'Housing is a Human Right' to council meetings or to protests we aren't making it up! "the National Housing Strategy Act, received Royal Assent on June 21, 2019. The NHS Act brings Canada in line with international standards, which require the right to housing to be ensured not only through policies and programs but also through independent monitoring and access to hearings and effective remedies." <https://housingrights.ca/right-to-housing-legislation-in-canada/>
3. Are you doing the COST EFFECTIVE THING - again, research makes it clear that housing people is vastly cheaper than the methods you are currently using - using bylaw to dismantle encampments without anywhere for those sheltering in them to go, criminalizing homelessness, providing inadequate emergency shelters that many in the unhoused community eschew for a variety of rational and experiential reasons. You celebrate the success (though I would question whether the folks living in Tiny Town would agree completely with your reporting) of facilities like Tiny Town but seem unwilling to replicate them though they would address much of what repeatedly makes the headlines ('disorder', property crime, public perceptions of being unsafe)
4. Are you doing the THINGS THAT YOU HAVE COMMITTED TO - in February 2024 the City of Victoria signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the province that laid out certain responsibilities including the provision of sanitation and other services to encampments (see bottom of page 3 and top of page 4 - https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/BC_Victoria_MOU_HEART_and_HEARTH.pdf) as well as what sounds like me to be a pretty clear indication that you should be looking at providing sanctioned encampments until appropriate housing is ready - which takes far too long ("Facilitate maintenance of land designated for temporary sheltering, including

garbage bin pick up and water utility connections." - top of page 4). There was certainly nothing said about putting up fences, dismantling encampments or confiscating people's belongings (otherwise known as theft)

The amount of money being allocated to the police budget and to bylaw is egregious in its inequity. That money could be so much better spent. A quick search of the 120-page budget document using the word housing shows around \$5 million allocated to what is supposedly a publicly agreed upon priority - less than one tenth of the police budget. There is not one mention of homelessness in the whole 120 page document.

The previous mayor and council commissioned a report on how to end homelessness (<https://pub-victoria.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=69943>) but as far as I am aware the city has failed to act on any of the recommendations contained in this report (see them on page 88-96). Your 'efforts' to try and arrange day storage for the belongings of unhoused people were pathetic - I said the Expression of Interest was doomed to failure from the start ([City of Victoria - Day Storage Facility Services for Unhoused Persons](#)) and indeed it was cancelled. The best you could do in terms of requests for 24/7 bathroom access on Pandora was to send a letter to the province requesting help - predictably what came of this was nothing (see point 4 above - did you not by signing this document commit to this?!).

Anyway - I could go on but the TL:DR is 'No matter what you say to the media or the general public the way you have drafted your budget makes your values and quality of your character clear - you think people who use drugs, those without homes and perhaps even every person who is poor are not worth spending money on and your priority is to get them out of sight in the most expedient way possible so that it looks like you have solved the problem'.

Personal Privacy

Victoria, BC Personal Privacy

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 budget
Date: December 23, 2024 8:24:09 AM

THE POLICE DO NOT NEED MORE MONEY. Invest instead in programs that help to **prevent** crime, instead of criminalizing behaviours that result from having inadequate housing, food, and other conditions critical to a healthy and satisfactory life. Police do not prevent crime. Criminalizing poverty, public drug use, or homelessness does not prevent crime. Criminalization creates the conditions in which crime flourishes and our unsupported, unhoused neighbours suffer and die. Too many people have died on the streets since police and by-law cruelly displaced the Pandora street encampment, scattering communities and stripping people of the few possessions they have left in this world. In what world will throwing away someone's tent and belongings *help* them to gain housing? This has to end.

In solidarity with those victimized by the living conditions and the criminalization of poverty in "Victoria",

[Personal Privacy](#)

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Re budget 2025
Date: December 20, 2024 1:22:31 PM

Dear Mayor and Council.

I have been shocked at the shift that you've allowed in treating the unhoused. Your complicity in increasingly eroding the human rights of these most vulnerable people, resulting in a heartbreaking increase in deaths.

I do not support increases to bylaw budget largely arising from this brutal approach to the unhoused. Use that money to put toward actual solutions.

And at a time when all social areas need more funding, this is not the time to throw more money at the police budget. This shift toward increased leaning on police and bylaw does not have my support.

Personal Privacy

PS: if you want anyone other than people with layers of privilege to weigh in on budgets etc, you really need to offer more accessible options for engagement.

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: City of Victoria - Budget for 2025
Date: December 20, 2024 2:36:00 PM

Hello,

I strongly support expenditures on climate action, particularly the reduction of fossil fuel use in Victoria.

Regards,
Personal Privacy
Victoria

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: City Budget 2025
Date: December 20, 2024 11:55:39 PM

Hello,

As a lifelong resident of Victoria, I am deeply disappointed by the proposed budget for 2025. The police do not need additional budget or roles. They are already bloated. Please consider putting budget towards community services that actually serve the community, especially those most vulnerable. It has been proven over and over again that supporting mental health, providing safe injection sites, housing, and other supports are SIGNIFICANTLY more effective than over policing. Our city deserves better.

Thank you.

Get [Outlook for Android](#)

From: [Victoria Clements](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Supporting the Lifeblood of Our Arts Community
Date: December 20, 2024 11:13:38 PM

Dear Mayor, Council and Legislative Services,

I am writing to express my heartfelt support for the City of Victoria's arts funding and to encourage the continuation or expansion of these programs.

As an original member of Haus of Owl, located at 780 Blanshard Street and partnered with Vivas, I have found an inclusive and inspiring space where artists like me can pursue our creative passions. This community not only nurtures individual growth but also enriches the broader cultural landscape of Victoria. If I had not found this here I would have moved once again out of our city back to Vancouver.

The arts are the lifeblood of our city, bringing people together, fostering innovation, and enhancing our quality of life. Increased funding ensures that spaces like Haus of Owl can continue to provide essential resources to artists and contribute to Victoria's vibrant identity.

Thank you for considering this investment in our shared future.

With warm regards,
Victoria Clements

--

Victoria Clements
Posh Entertainment / Victoria Film Industry Network & Events
Marketing, Promotions, PR & Events
Specializing in the Art, Film & Fashion Industries
Cell: 604-722-2914
E: poshintertain@gmail.com
W: www.poshintertainment.com
FB: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/VictoriaFilmIndustry>
LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/victoria-clements-834117/>

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Please Fully Fund the Police - my feedback on the 2025-2029 Draft Financial Plan (2025 Draft Budget)
Date: December 20, 2024 12:26:06 PM
Attachments: [Picture \(Device Independent Bitmap\) 1.jpg](#)
[Picture \(Device Independent Bitmap\) 2.jpg](#)
[Picture \(Device Independent Bitmap\) 3.jpg](#)
[Picture \(Device Independent Bitmap\) 4.jpg](#)
[Picture \(Device Independent Bitmap\) 5.jpg](#)
[Picture \(Device Independent Bitmap\) 6.jpg](#)

Regarding feedback on the 2025-2029 Draft Financial Plan (2025 Draft Budget):

The Times Colonist recently reported that jobs will be lost and community safety could be compromised if Victoria council insists the Victoria and Esquimalt Police Board cut more than \$2 million from its 2025 budget. This was reiterated by the Chief of Police.

Please fully fund the Victoria Police Department with \$68.3 million; officers provide an invaluable service to residents, businesses and visitors – they keep us safe.

A few cost-saving recommendations to redirect funds away from unnessecary city projects and towards policing services, includes, but is not limited to:

1. Please stop building permanent infrastructure in the middle of the roadways with raised curbs, trees and plants. They are costly to build and maintain. In addition, the roads are now very congested with raised curb bike lanes, infrastructure in the middle of the road and one-lane of traffic that makes it impossible for police and emergency vehicles to provide timely emergency care.
This scenario will be even worse after a substantive earthquake! For example, if even one vehicle blocks traffic, there is no way around – it will be impossible for emergency service vehicles to help the injured who are trapped/injured or dying downtown.



2. Government street between the Inner Harbour and Yates Street has the widest sidewalks in the city for pedestrians (see example older photo below) – lets open the street again; if only for taxis, pedicabs, deliveries and, in particular, to allow easier access by police and emergency vehicles.
We don't need to close the vehicle lane on government street. This can be done for special events only.

Savings can be achieved by no longer maintaining structures blocking the road and making it easier for street cleaners/snow clearance. For example,

- No longer moving, painting and watering plants in round unattractive planters in middle of street,
- Removing round wooden benches in the middle of street (which do not match heritage character of downtown).
- Removing wooden patios from pubs/cafes that extend unnecessarily into the street.



3. It is costly to set up and remove the Lights of Wonder Christmas figures/display from Centennial Square. Since the city of Victoria does not support plastic (e.g., bags) then please sell the Not-so-Wonderful giant

plastic displays with numerous cement blocks to another city.

(Also, the Tulips and Canoe art structure from Bastion Square should not have been moved to the parklet at Johnson Street Bridge; please don't spend tax dollars on these types of unnecessary moves again)



4. Please remove redundant pedestrian crosswalk that blocks the only turning lane off of Johnson Street Bridge. There are several pedestrian crossings nearby at Pandora and Johnson – why contribute to traffic congestion.



5. Please stop installing bus stop benches on the raised cement medium between bike lanes and roadway. It is dangerous for elderly/disabled pedestrians to cross the bike lane, then have to step down a raised cement curb to access a bus. There is no reason why bike users should trump safe pedestrian access.



Thank you for providing a resident (and pedestrian/cyclist) of Victoria with an opportunity to comment on the 2025-2029 Draft Financial Plan (2025 Draft Budget).

Sincerely,
Personal Privacy

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 budget feedback
Date: December 21, 2024 10:26:24 PM

Hi there!

I am a Victoria resident sharing my concern about the shocking amount of the city budget going to the VicPD.

Fund allocation needs to reflect the needs of our community and I do not support a budget where almost a quarter of the annual budget for our city goes to police. Resources would be much better allocated to climate action, reparations and implementing TRCs calls to action, arts, music and culture, parks and recreation, our public library, feeding, housing, and providing supportive services to the community members who need it.

I urge the city to reconsider their budget.

Thank you,

[Personal Privacy](#)

Sent from Gmail Mobile

From: [Personal Privacy](#)
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: Draft Budget & Obscene Police Spending
Date: December 21, 2024 11:20:48 AM

Hi there,

The fact that 23% of the budget is set to go towards police while only 2% to the Victoria Public Library for example is a massive injustice. Looking at police in the CRD lately and their actions (sexual assault, etc.) tells us we should be funding other forms of community. I would like to see more funding for non-police mental and community health services. We have a massive amount of vulnerable people in our community that need support and services.

More funding for the library would also be amazing, looking at other libraries across communities you see things like tool shops, 3D printers, and libraries modernizing their offerings. It would be incredible to see things like this available at our public library.

The police budget needs to be massively scaled back and they need learn to focus their time on their relationship with the community they serve and that starts within.

Thanks,
[Personal Privacy](#)

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Legislative Services email](#)
Subject: 2025 Draft Budget
Date: December 22, 2024 7:13:43 PM

Dear Mayor, City Councillors, and city staff.

I am increasingly dismayed by the cavalier spending the city is engaging in. The city should learn to function within the revenues as currently available with only an increase to taxes that matches the cost of inflation. The city should also consider streamlining business processes to reduce waste.

Projects that should be shelved are the \$9 million centennial square and topaz park upgrades. Put a pause in the bike lane construction hidden as Multi-modal Corridor improvements. As well, I would suggest a reduction in grant funding and funding to public arts.

If these are priorities than internal operation costs, ironically the engagement costs, and other less necessary cost should be reduced to increase transfer to capital costs and fund grants.

This council and the previous council have shown that they are irresponsible with money by engaging high capital expenditure during an inflationary period. I also have to recognize that the city staff are also responsible for excessive spending as well, because they advise the City Council.

I can only support a 3% increase in taxes this year as inflation has levelled off. We pay the highest taxes in the region, and I do not see a line item in the budget for pushing for amalgamation with other municipalities or advocacy for other municipalities to take their share of the costs of the homelessness crisis.

Increases in taxes put a lot of pressure on families, and land lords (in turn renters) at a time where basics like food are getting harder and harder to afford. If you want make Victoria livable stop spending excessively and giving yourselves raises to cover your cost of living when the rest of the citizens are struggling to make ends meet.

Sincerely,

Personal Privacy

Sent from my iPhone

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Victoria Mayor and Council](#)
Subject: Feedback on the 2025 Draft Budget
Date: December 20, 2024 6:41:05 PM

Dear Victoria Mayor and Council,

Thank-you for the opportunity to provide input on the 2025-2029 Draft Budget.

My biggest areas of feedback in the 2025-2029 Draft Budget are related to “Community Safety and Wellbeing”, a bit of a misnomer given the spending categories, which largely focus on law and order approaches to addressing public safety such as policing and bylaw enforcement, that I do not associate with the concept of “wellbeing”.

I do not support the proposed 9.71% budget increase for the Victoria Police Department (VicPD), especially given the impact it has on the proposed tax increase of 12.17%, the highest tax increase proposed in the last 10 years. I strongly believe that Council should be pushing for an independent audit of VicPD’s expenditures, given the significant budget increases demanded by VicPD year after year. Policing and other law and order measures used to respond to homelessness, visible poverty, mental illness and substance use are the costliest and least effective ways to truly address these social issues.

Related, I have recently been deeply disturbed with the City of Victoria’s approach to addressing homelessness and sheltering. I do not support the city spending \$5.3M in bylaw services, especially when so much of this budget line item goes to street sweeps along Pandora Ave., displacing unhoused folks across the city and consistently throwing out people’s sentimental and survival possessions.

In a 2023 study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, researchers found that encampment sweeps, like those happening daily in Victoria parks and on Pandora Ave., lead to substantial increases in overdose deaths, hospitalizations and life threatening health issues. In fact, they found that these sweeps may contribute to 15-25% of deaths among the unhoused population over 10 years. In the last month, we have lost at least 13 people in the unhoused community in Victoria. I believe there is a direct correlation between the City’s encampment policies and these deaths.

While housing and social services may be the responsibility of higher levels of government, the City of Victoria’s approach to enforcing sheltering is squarely in your authority. While Council also considers spending an additional \$4.7M to enforce the daytime sheltering ban, I would like to encourage you to not only think of the financial costs, but the human costs of this daytime sheltering ban.

I believe that community safety and wellbeing encompass other important investments that, while you may argue are responsibilities of higher levels of government, you can and should invest in. I urge you to consider increasing your City Grants budget of \$6.2M to include direct investments in programs like AVI’s Community-Led Crisis Response team, housing outreach teams, harm reduction programs and other important initiatives that actually improve wellbeing and save lives.

I also urge you to use every tool in your toolbox to bring more shelter-rate housing to Victoria.

While the City of Victoria is seen as provincial leaders in new housing builds, very few of these new builds are addressing the needs of people who are experiencing or at acute risk of experiencing homelessness. The truth is that people will continue to live in encampments until housing is available that meets their financial and social needs.

A community is safest when everyone has their basic needs met and their fundamental human rights respected. Thank-you for considering this feedback in your budget deliberations.

Respectfully,
Personal Privacy

Victoria - Lekwungen Territory

From: Personal Privacy
To: [Victoria Mayor and Council](#)
Subject: Citizen input on the 2025/2026 budget proposals
Date: December 20, 2024 1:04:07 PM
Attachments: [city budget letter.docx](#)

Attn City Manager.

Find attached, and as detailed below, my response to the City's invitation to comment on the 2025/6 proposed budget.

Thank you for so advising Council.

Personal Privacy

Victoria BC
Personal Privacy

Letter to Mayor and Council, City of Victoria
From Personal Privacy, Victoria, B.C. December 20, 2024.

Re: 2025 City Budget and Crystal Pool Borrowing Referendum

Madam Mayor and Members of Council:

Your current budget proposes a 6.75% lift, significantly above Canada's current annual inflation rate of 2%. Furthermore, you project ongoing revenue increases of only 1.54% against increasing expenditures of 8.39% per year.

This is alarming enough, except that the budget projections do not include one massive expense facing taxpayers sometime in the near future. That is a risk of up to \$2.3 billion to address the estimated 66% of aging at-risk infrastructure for which replacement cost estimates are still unknown.

One source of funds could be available to help mitigate this exposure. Development Capital Cost charges are intended to cover these kinds of costs.

I note you have recently tripled Development Capital Cost charges to developers. For instance, for a new single-family house, the charge has risen from \$6,871 to \$23,734. This sounds significant. But these numbers should be compared with similar charges in Kelowna (\$30,615) or Surrey (\$61,600). In fact, we find that for years Victoria has been at the bottom of the list of BC municipalities in terms DCC charges, including our neighbouring municipalities.

Now the City is suggesting it expend up to \$215 million on a new Crystal Pool. This would deplete existing capital reserves by \$47 million to reduce borrowing to \$166 million. Depletion of capital reserves leaves the taxpayers exposed to hundreds of millions of infrastructure risk. But there is also no mention of how the new Crystal stacks up against other items on the public amenity wish list. For instance, the new central library promised 20 years ago. Or cost-sharing requests for a new downtown

Art Gallery and Maritime Museum, upgrades to the Bastion Square historic courthouse for a community arts hub, a downtown residents community centre, social housing initiatives, a new urban park, new arts performance spaces or even completion of the harbour-front plan after 30 years of dithering.

Some critical decisions need to be made. The development cost charge schedule needs to be evaluated and measured against real infrastructure risks and the community's amenity wish list.

Vanity projects such as Centennial Square should be scaled back to a simple clean-up and repair. The Crystal Pool project should be rigorously reassessed for affordability. Perhaps alternatives such as a seismic upgrade and community centre addition would suffice. A twenty-year capital works project budget should be articulated. This should provide costs, options and timing for capital works that meet the social and cultural needs of Victoria's rapidly growing core-city population.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this year's budget discussions.

Sincerely,

Personal Privacy

Personal Privacy

Letter to Mayor and Council, City of Victoria
From **Personal Privacy**, Victoria, B.C. December 20, 2024.

Re: 2025 City Budget and Crystal Pool Borrowing Referendum

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Now the City is suggesting it expend up to \$215 million on a new Crystal Pool. This would deplete existing capital reserves by \$47 million to reduce borrowing to \$166 million. Depletion of capital reserves leaves the taxpayers exposed to hundreds of millions of infrastructure risk. But there is also no mention of how the new Crystal stacks up against other items on the public amenity wish list. For instance, the new central library promised 20 years ago. Or cost-sharing requests for a new downtown Art Gallery and Maritime Museum, upgrades to the Bastion Square historic courthouse for a community arts hub, a downtown residents community centre, social housing initiatives, a new urban park, new arts performance spaces or even completion of the harbour-front plan after 30 years of dithering.

Some critical decisions need to be made. The development cost charge schedule needs to be evaluated and measured against real infrastructure risks and the community's amenity wish list.

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Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this year's budget discussions.

Sincerely,

Personal Privacy

Victoria, B.C.
Personal Privacy



December 20, 2024.

To: Mayor Alto and Members of Council,

From: Sandra Severs
President, Victoria Downtown Residents Association

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the proposed 2025 City budget. I recognize that you have a difficult task before you as you trim the draft budget to deliver property tax increases within an acceptable level to the voting public. Having watched the staff presentations and read the material posted on-line, I am aware of challenging compromises before you.

While unable to comment on the particulars of this draft budget, I do want to highlight some priorities/values that I think are important. I am grateful to see that the funding for community associations and centres remain intact in the 2025 budget. Your commitment to supporting community building at the neighbourhood level is much appreciated. The strengthening of neighbourhood level organizations is important to the goal of building healthy, resilient communities.

I agree with the priorities presented in Deputy City Manager Thompson's *2025 Draft Budget Public Engagement Summary Report* to the Committee of the Whole on October 26, 2024. Housing and community safety and wellbeing are the top priorities of residents of the Downtown neighbourhood as well. While climate change ranked much lower than the others in the list of priorities, I would suggest that it is an over-arching umbrella under which the other items need to be viewed and not a separate category in and of itself. It functions like the umbrella of reconciliation as defined within Ms. Thompson's report. As Brewer, Hammond and Markey argue in their book *Nature-First Cities* (2024), we need to move toward "reconciliation ecology." As more housing is added to the stock in Victoria, I would ask that ecosystem health not be lost from the conversation. VCAN has recently completed a count of Garry Oaks on private properties in each neighbourhood under a My Great Neighbourhood Grant and believes that maintaining the remaining 2 percent of the Garry Oak ecosystem is critical. The pressure to build housing should not outweigh the need to maintain the remains of this fragile and unique ecosystem.

As a member of the Mayor's Leaders Advisory Committee, I am aware of the content of the Community Safety and Wellbeing plan that will come before you early in the New Year. As you make decisions for the 2025 budget, I hope you will maintain a continuing commitment to the structural changes needed to make our city a safer place.

I read the report on costs for increased bylaw enforcement and was glad to see that, not only was the price of enforcement prohibitive, but the report also acknowledged that increased enforcement will not solve the issues of street disorder and visible homelessness. While I know that the Community Safety and Wellbeing plan will not directly impact the 2025 budget, I would ask that you leave yourselves some "wiggle room" to respond to the systemic recommendations that will undoubtedly come before you when you consider the report. The issue of community safety and well-being is a crucial one for residents of this city and the changes that will be required to make meaningful change will have an expected price tag. Having some flexibility in your budget considerations for 2025, in light of possible changes in 2026, will be important.

With thanks for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sandra Severs". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'S'.

Sandra Severs

ATTACHMENT B – TOPIC ANALYSIS TABLE

TOPIC	# PEOPLE MENTIONED	% SUPPORT	% OPPOSED	DETAILS/RE-OCCURRING COMMENTS
Police Budget Increase	81	17%	83%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in Police budget doesn't target the root cause of crime • VicPD has a higher rate of officers per residents (2.2 per 1,000) in comparison to other Canadian Cities (1.8 per 1,000) • Funding should go to community services/social services instead • Support: Need to prioritize public safety
Increase in Property Taxes	76	8%	92%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to trim budget where possible to support affordability • Not sustainable if there is additional tax increase from Crystal Pool project • Support: We need to fund the programs residents rely on
Community Well-Being Services (i.e., health and mental health, harm reduction, support for people who use drugs)	61	90%	10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More funding for these services in comparison to police funding • For those opposed: Leave the responsibility to the province
Housing Initiatives	49	96%	4%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to fund more affordable housing projects • Housing is a human right • For those opposed: leave the housing projects to the provincial and federal governments

TOPIC	# PEOPLE MENTIONED	% SUPPORT	% OPPOSED	DETAILS/RE-OCCURRING COMMENTS
“Beautification Projects”	46	2%	98%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pause the Centennial Square project as it's not necessary right now - funding should go to other initiatives that benefit residents • Government Street updates are more beneficial for tourists than residents • Stop vanity/frill projects
Increase/maintain Grant Funding for Community Initiatives (i.e., community gardens, arts, venue spaces, etc.)	46	87%	13%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Double the Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator Grant • Need to continue funding for our struggling arts scene • Additional funding for at-risk youth during winter and extreme weather events
Increase in Infrastructure budget (i.e., construction, sidewalks, roads, etc.)	38	87%	13%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for increasing the width of sidewalks • More public washrooms • Spend less money on infrastructure upgrades and focus on teaching people how to walk and ride safely • Increase funding for physical accessibility projects
Increase funding for Arts, Culture and Events	37	89%	11%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding for arts; benefits our community well-being • The small investment in arts make a major impact on the liveability of the city • Received correspondence from 11 local arts organizations
Increase in bike lanes budget	29	48%	52%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support: Keep building bike lanes- makes it safer for bikers and encourages residents not to drive • Oppose: Too many bike lanes already - makes traffic worse • Not every resident is able to bike
Increase in Parks budget	22	86%	14%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize multi-purpose flexibles spaces

TOPIC	# PEOPLE MENTIONED	% SUPPORT	% OPPOSED	DETAILS/RE-OCCURRING COMMENTS
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More vehicle access to Clover Point • Idea: Propose naming rights for parks to help offset costs
Increase in Library budget	22	100%	0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library offers free and much-needed resource for residents • Push to open library on Sundays
Increase in funding for Climate Action initiatives	18	83%	17%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swift and drastic climate action is required for the safety of our community • We are in a climate crisis • Opposed: less EV chargers
Increase in Recreation budget	17	82%	18%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents rely on these activities; cutting the budget for this hurts the most vulnerable community members
Staff layoffs and program cuts	15	100%	0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise positions to help minimize tax increase • Eliminate vacant positions
Increase for Reconciliation	9	56%	44%	No common themes
Increase in funding for Bylaw Services	9	0%	100%	No common themes
Increase for funding for downtown revitalization (i.e., OUR DWTN program)	5	60%	40%	No common themes



Council Member Motion

For the Committee of the Whole Meeting of February 6th, 2025 *(time sensitive)*

To: Committee of the Whole

Date: January 30th, 2025

From: Councillor Gardiner

Subject: CRD Foodlands Access Service Establishment Bylaw

BACKGROUND:

Councillors have received e-mails about Alternate Approval Process (AAP) initiatives being carried out throughout the Region.

Appeals for review of one specific CRD initiative have been made to Councillors, with the first email I recall dated January 15. The content of the appeal gave me great concern about the AAP process and the initiative itself. It is for that reason that this Council Member Motion recommends that City of Victoria CRD Directors press the pause button on this initiative.

The CRD initiative being questioned is the Foodlands Access Service Establishment Bylaw No. 1, 2024.

The most fulsome submission was made by Jason Austin, a City of Victoria taxpayer who had some involvement with our continuing Council, having served on a Mayor's Task Force on Downtown Disturbances some years ago. He is Certified Professional Accountant and a farmer who also owns commercial property in the City.

In his words "I am a retired CPA and I have Gatton Farm in Central Saanich. We (my volunteers and I) are the largest provider of fresh produce to the food banks in the Capital Region. We donate all our produce to the food banks, averaging 40,000lbs a year. We serve Our Place, Rainbow Kitchen, Women's Transition House, Burnside-Gorge, Community Food Support, Fairfield-Gonzales, St John the Divine, Fernwood Community, Oaklands Community & Saanich Baptist. So I can speak to food security . . . "

Mr Austin's plea is to have the CRD alter the path it is on regarding its Foodlands Access Services Establishment initiative. To consult with the farming community and municipalities, to have a public discussion that includes information on options and evidence, and costs and benefits to farmers. (see Appendix A)

Information provided to me by CRD staff confirms Mr Austin's estimates of financial contributions from municipalities. While the estimated budget for the first year pilot project at Bear Hill Regional Park would be \$320,000, the maximum requisition in subsequent years is set at \$1 million. The City's share of the requisition would be about \$250,000 going forward.

The information provided to Councillors, particularly by Mr Austin, speaks of a 2019 attempt to establish a similar program. The information he provided speaks of misinformation, misinterpretation of data, and non-supported assertions. The municipalities declined that program at that time. Early this week, the Councils of North Saanich and Central Saanich, municipalities with significant farmlands, spoke of their unease with this proposed program. (see Appendix B)

A supplementary question to ponder is this, why is the City of Victoria, through its Directors to the CRD, willing to participate in this initiative? It is not farms within the city of Victoria that would be affected.

Does the majority on this Council think this city should be either financing this initiative or telling the farming communities on the peninsula how to farm?

TIME SENSITIVE:

There is only one remaining COTW meeting prior to the CRD Board meeting of February 12, at which the Alternative Approval Process results and the adoption of Bylaw No. 4602 “Foodlands Access Service Establishment Bylaw No. 1, 2024 are to be discussed.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council request the Mayor and any other Victoria CRD Director(s) attending the next Capital Regional District Board meeting to voice the City of Victoria’s opposition to the adoption of Bylaw No. 4602 “Foodlands Access Service Establishment Bylaw No. 1, 2024”.

Further, that this Motion be considered at the Council meeting of February 6th, 2025.

Respectfully submitted,



Councillor Gardiner

Attachments:

Appendix A_CRD Foodlands Access Service Establishment Bylaw

Appendix B_CRD Foodlands Access Service Establishment Bylaw

Appendix A

CMM: CRD Foodlands Access Service Establishment Bylaw

From: Jason Austin <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, January 30, 2025 6:41 PM
To: Victoria Mayor and Council <mayorandcouncil@victoria.ca>
Cc: Marg Gardiner (Councillor) <mgardiner@victoria.ca>
Subject: Proposed CRD Foodlands Access bylaw 4602

The Mayor & Council
City of Victoria

Dear Mayor & Council,

I wrote to you on January 15, 21, 22 & 24th 2025 about the proposed CRD Foodlands Access bylaw 4602.

There has been a major development since then - on Monday both North Saanich and Central Saanich councils passed resolutions opposing the CRD proposal:

North Saanich: *"That Council direct the Mayor or Alternate Representative attending the next Capital Regional District Board meeting to voice the District's opposition to the Alternative Approval Process and further, adoption of Bylaw No. 4602 "Foodlands Access Service Establishment Bylaw No. 1, 2024."*
Central Saanich: *"That the District call on the CRD to reconsider the current foodlands proposal and have a public discussion that includes information on options, evidence, and a public vote."*

There are clear reasons for you to follow the lead of Central Saanich and call on the CRD to reconsider its proposal in a public forum:

- **There is no study to show any benefit to the capital region for this potentially massive expenditure.**
- the CRD proposal does not address the big food producers in the region like the egg producers, chicken producers, meat producers, or the large scale crop farmers. Anything the CRD proposal accomplished would be an unmeasurable ripple on the periphery of the farming world. You should not mistake vocal passion for results.
- the CRD proposal has been put forward as an AAP. Yes, this is legal but is it appropriate for a bylaw that can charge the municipalities over a \$1,000,000 every year? I have been speaking to many people about this AAP and have not found a single person who was aware of it. This is wrong.
- the municipalities who could be charged up to \$1,000,000 were not canvassed, despite CRD staff saying this was essential. Are you aware that Victoria's share of a \$1,000,000 requisition is \$230,000 a year? Don't you think Victoria Council should have been told of that and have the opportunity to give their input?
- there is the technical issue that the AAP notice seems deficient in that it was written as if the \$1,000,000 was a once only charge and the CRD did not disclose to the public it was an annual charge.

Please pass a resolution to the effect that *"the City of Victoria call on the CRD to reconsider the current foodlands proposal, seek input from the region's municipalities, and have a public discussion that includes*

information on options, evidence, and a public vote." This motion leaves the CRD proposal alive, but calls on them to find another path forward by consulting with the municipalities; preparing a business case to show there is a benefit to the public; and putting that before the public for an assent vote.

Sincerely,

Jason Austin
Gatton Farm
Saanichton

CRD Foodlands Access Service Establishment Bylaw

January 27, 2025 Council Meetings

Central Saanich

“That the District call on the CRD to reconsider the current foodlands proposal and have a public discussion that includes information on options, evidence, and a public vote.”

North Saanich

“That Council direct the Mayor or Alternate Representative attending the next Capital Regional District Board meeting to voice the District's opposition to the Alternative Approval Process and further, adoption of Bylaw No. 4602 “Foodlands Access Service Establishment Bylaw No. 1, 2024.”

“Defamatory Statement. Any definite oral or written expression...that from the perspective of right-thinking persons would adversely affect the reputation of the plaintiff in their community. The remark must be: (a) harmful; (b) presumed to be false and malicious; (c) clearly aimed at the plaintiff; and (d) conveyed to and received by a third party.”

“Defamation, 1. Libel or slander. 2. An area of law concerned with the protection of reputation against the publication of falsehoods that are defamatory in the sense of tending to lower reputation in the estimation of reasonable persons in the Community.”

“Slander, The making of a defamatory statement orally or in another more transitory form.”

When anyone is told that Stephen Hammond or Councillor Hammond has “lied to the public” and this is not refuted, “right-thinking persons” might believe there is truth to that statement, or it gives them reason to suspect that the defamatory statement may be true. This may do harm to Councillor Hammond in numerous ways:

Business Reputation:

Stephen Hammond’s business for the last 32 years involves educating people about inappropriate workplace behaviour and how to address such behaviour. As part of this practise, Hammond has literally been hired to investigate workplace behaviour to determine who has told the truth and who has lied. If someone wants to hire Hammond, but finds a reference to Stephen Hammond making “lies,” without another reference to refute, retract or apologize for such statements, this can lead to reputational and actual financial harm to Hammond’s business.

Stephen Hammond is a proud member of the Law Society of British Columbia (non-practising). Even though Hammond has not practised law in decades, he renews his membership each year and ensures he’s up to date in his area of expertise: workplace behaviour and workplace human rights. Numerous clients have hired Hammond *because* of his legal standing. Hammond must uphold the highest standards of the Law Society. If an accusation of telling lies were left unchecked, this could do him reputational harm.

Community Reputation:

In the community, Hammond feels he has a reputation for being an honest person, a community builder and a good neighbour. If someone from Hammond’s community is told that Stephen Hammond (as councillor or otherwise) “lies” to the public, without other reference to refute, retract or apologize for such statements, this can lead to reputational harm to Hammond in his community.

City Council Reputation:

Councillor Hammond received enough votes in the last election to sit on Victoria Council as an equal member, making decisions for those who reside in, do business in, or visit, the City of Victoria. As a councillor, while Hammond offers his background, education and community involvement to the voters, he also offers his honesty to act in the best interest of the city. People may agree or disagree with the positions Councillor Hammond takes and his votes cast; however, they should never be of the impression that Councillor Hammond “lied to the public.” If Councillor Hammond chooses to seek re-election in 2026 and beyond, being left with an accusation of lying,

which goes unchecked, will diminish his standing among voters and will do him reputational harm in the eyes of Victoria's electorate and all others involved in Victoria's community.

Basis for the accusation that Councillor Hammond "lied to the public."

In Councillor Hammond's Council Member Motion at the COTW meeting of January 23, 2025, Council, at the suggestion of the Mayor, decided to reveal some of the information from a Closed Council meeting of September 12, 2024 where the Crystal Pool plan was discussed. At the January 23, 2025 meeting, the Mayor stated the "rise and report" revealed that at that Closed Council meeting, City Council "unanimously" "...agreed we would not take any position" on the referendum of the borrowing and location for the proposed Crystal Pool plan. In practical terms, that meant Council would not encourage voters to vote for the questions posed in the referendum which, at that time, had not been given a date (it's never been discussed to encourage voters to vote against the referendum).

For fear of being in violation of the Province's statute, the Community Charter, Section 117 (Confidentiality) Councillor Hammond, nor any other member of Council can reveal if a vote in Closed was unanimous, unless it's agreed to by a vote of Council. As a result, Councillor Hammond cannot reveal what the vote was, but he can state that the statement of the September 12, 2025 vote being "unanimous" was not factual.

As well, for fear of being in violation of Section 117 of the Community Charter, Councillor Hammond, nor any other member of Council can reveal what was in fact passed. However, Councillor Hammond can state that Council "would not take any position" is also not the wording of the Closed motion. It's not factual. There was something passed, but that was not it.

At the January 23, 2025 COTW meeting, the Mayor allowed the release of a number of PowerPoint Slides that formed part of the presentation given to Council. The slides gave examples of various communications the City could provide during the referendum period (and even before). These were the slides revealed at the January 23, 2025 COTW meeting:

Promoting “yes” vote

- Pros:
 - Clarity of message and purpose
 - Less likely to invite challenges
- Con:
 - Requires clear separation from statutory election advertising
 - Potential additional procedural requirements

4 Crystal Pool Referendum Options | September 12, 2024 Closed



Neutral and Balanced

- “Default” strategy
- Pros:
 - Provides information about the pool project
- Cons:
 - Vulnerable to attack as biased

3 Crystal Pool Referendum Options | September 12, 2024 Closed



Voting Information only

- Pros:
 - Limited communications with lower cost
- Cons:
 - No substantive information about the project potentially leaving public unclear about the merits of the referendum

Crystal Pool and Wellness Centre Referendum

Vote on
February 8, 2025

MORE INFO:
victoria.ca/referendum

5 Crystal Pool Referendum Options | September 12, 2024 Closed

These slides were shown to council members as options or possible options for the communications campaign, encouraging people to vote on this important referendum. At no time did Council vote on any of these communications strategies, nor did Council offer input about which message City Staff should present to the public. The majority of Council did vote on a motion, however, that motion cannot be revealed as it didn't form part of the rise and report from council.

While City Staff would follow Council's instructions in Closed (yet to be revealed), there was no prohibition preventing individual councillors from expressing their desired outcome, how they would vote, if they wanted to be part of, or lead a campaign on one side of the referendum questions, or the other sides, as long as they never suggested, implied or stated they were speaking for the City.

Councillor Hammond did not remember the detail of these slides, nor had he memorized these slides. Most likely, no councillor did either. Councillor Caradonna stated that Councillor Hammond "lied" to the public because Hammond, and all of council, was given the staff-confirmed message and wording back on September 12, 2024, and that the City's Communication staff would be disseminating this exact message to the public. Again, no one said any of these slides would form the communication's strategy for the City.


Because no one is allowed to reveal the details of the motion from Closed, the exact wording given to staff cannot yet be revealed. However, unless Council used the words "Neutral and Balanced" to staff, then no one can know for sure what the communications campaign was going to use for their communications to the public.

If, in fact, Councillor Hammond or other councillors were expected to remember, or memorize these slides, then Councillor Hammond and all councillors would have remembered that THE CITY'S OWN STAFF highlighted that their example of "neutral and balanced" would in fact be "vulnerable to attack as biased" [see wording inside blue line below for emphasis]. Therefore, using logic, a councillor might have thought that when Council gave direction to staff in Closed, staff

would not use the very wording THEY IDENTIFIED as “vulnerable to attack as biased.” [CAPS added for emphasis]

Neutral and Balanced

- “Default” strategy
- Pros:
 - Provides information about the pool project
- Cons:
 - Vulnerable to attack as biased



© Crystal Pool Referendum Options | September 12, 2024 Closed

Hence, when on December 24, 2024, Councillor Hammond was surprised to see the bus shelter ad (below) on Fort Street near Douglas Street, he thought, just AS CITY STAFF HAD POINTED OUT, this advertisement was “vulnerable to attack as biased.” On that night in December, Councillor Hammond merely came to the same conclusion city staff identified, which is this advertisement might be perceived as “biased.” To add to the perception of “bias”, there is no reference at all to a referendum on this transit ad. People reading this ad might merely think that “A more accessible sustainable modern more inclusive bigger Crystal Pool and Fitness Centre” is coming to Victoria. When Council gave (the yet unknown) direction in Closed to city staff, there’s a very good chance that Council was not suggesting using advertising that stated nothing about the actual referendum or voting process. [CAPS added for emphasis]



Therefore, beyond the defamatory language that Councillor Caradonna directed towards Councillor Hammond in the Council chambers on January 23, 2025, it makes no sense that Councillor Caradonna would accuse Councillor Hammond of a “lie” when Councillor Hammond was merely stating the very thing City Staff pointed out to Councillors in the Closed meeting of September 12, 2024 and that has been revealed in the rise and report information on January 23, 2025.

The Code of Conduct is written as follows:

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR COUNCIL MEMBERS A BYLAW OF THE CITY OF VICTORIA

The purpose of this Bylaw is to establish standards for the conduct of elected officials in order to promote responsible governance for the City and create a process for investigating complaints about their conduct by an independent third party.

PART 2 – STANDARDS AND VALUES

General Principles

4 A member must uphold the following standards and values:

(a) integrity: a member must be honest, demonstrate strong ethical principles, act fairly, and respect their duty to maintain confidentiality and privacy when it arises;

(b) accountability: a member must be accountable for their decisions and actions, competent and diligent, and act in the best interests of the City as a whole, without regard to the member’s personal interests;

(c) respect: a member must treat members of the public, other members, committee members, and employees respectfully, without abuse, bullying or intimidation and ensure that the work environment is free from discrimination and harassment; and

(d) leadership and collaboration: a member must lead, listen to, and positively influence others, conduct duties in an open and transparent manner except where authorized by law, and work together with others to create or meet a common goal through collective efforts.

PART 3 – COMMUNICATIONS AND CONFIDENTIALITY Public Communications by a member

5 (4) Without limiting the ability of a member to hold a position on an issue and respectfully express their opinions, a member must:

(a) ensure that their communications accurately reflect the facts of Council decisions;

(b) ensure that all communications relating to Council business are accurate and not issue any communication that the member knows, or ought to have known, to be false; and

(c) ensure that all communications issued by, or on behalf of a member, including communications made via social media, are respectful and do not discriminate, harass, defame, or demonstrate disrespect toward any person or group.

At first glance, and without limiting the ability to cite more or different sections of the Code of Conduct, in the future, it appears that Councillor Caradonna’s actions may have violated Part 2, Section 4, subsections (a), (b), (c) and (d), along with Part 3, Section 5 (4) and subsections (a), (b) and (c).

To do the right thing, a public apology to Councillor Hammond is required, stating Councillor Caradonna’s statement “That’s a lie, Councillor Hammond. You just lied to the public” was false,

that Councillor Hammond did not lie in his Council Member Motion of January 23, 2025, or any of his statements, written or spoken at that meeting was a lie and that Councillor Caradonna fully and unequivocally, apologizes for making that statement.

However, even more than doing the right thing, a full and sincere apology will prevent Councillor Hammond from making a Code of Conduct complaint and/or taking civil legal action for defaming Councillor Hammond. Either process will be taxing on all parties, will likely be drawn out and will likely cost the taxpayers of Victoria money, when none is needed. A simple, full and sincere apology that is acceptable to Councillor Hammond will put an end to this matter.

Candidate Jeremy Caradonna, as he then was, prior to being elected Councillor Caradonna, during the election process in 2022, put in writing an apology to Stephen Hammond, as he then was, for statements he made about candidate Stephen Hammond, that were false. Presumably Councillor Caradonna already understands the importance of being truthful and not making false, inflammatory and defamatory statements about anyone, let alone a councillor who is in a position of trust for helping to run the City of Victoria.

If Councillors want to uphold the honourable principles of being respectful to one another, this requested apology is the minimum requirement when anyone makes false and defamatory statements about anyone, let alone fellow Councillors. Regardless of our stand on any position, and our close allegiance or friendship to any fellow council members, if this request is not supported, there is the risk future meetings will deteriorate to name calling and defamatory statements.

I believe City of Victoria Councillors are better than this.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council request Councillor Caradonna make a public, unequivocal and sincere apology to Councillor Hammond, stating Councillor Caradonna's statement "That's a lie, Councillor Hammond. You just lied to the public" was false, and that Councillor Hammond did not lie in his Council Member Motion of January 23, 2025, or in any of his statements, written or spoken at that meeting.

Respectfully submitted,



Councillor Hammond