



Mayoral Direction

Mayoral Direction No.: DI-2025-01
Date: July 18, 2025
Subject: 2026 City Budget

In accordance with section 284.16 of the Municipal Act, 2001, and section 7 of Ontario Regulation 530/22, the Mayor shall, on or before February 1 of each year, prepare a proposed budget for the City, provide the proposed budget to Council for its consideration, and make the proposed budget available to the public.

I, Martin Ritsma, Mayor of the City of Stratford, pursuant to Section 284.3 of the Municipal Act, 2001, hereby direct the Chief Administrative Officer and Director of Corporate Services/Treasurer to:

1. In an effort to address significant affordability pressures within the community, prepare a draft 2026 operating and capital budget, for presentation to the Mayor, based on the following:
 - a. A total property tax impact of not more than 3.5% for the City Services portion of the budget which is under direct control of the Mayor and Council.
 - b. Preparation and presentation of two additional scenarios for the 2026 City Services portion outlining what disinvestments were made to reach a 3.5% tax levy impact for 2026, which would be added back to reach a:
 - i. 4.0% tax levy impact; or a
 - ii. 4.5% tax levy impact.

- c. Includes the following initiatives:
 - i. Development of the Grand Trunk Site.
 - ii. Development of a Mayor's Task Force with the purpose of working with the Social Services Department and other City Departments, the Community Safety and Well-being Committee and community partners to address homelessness and the social well-being of the City and support initiatives that accelerate solutions to housing, mental health, safety and addictions issues in our community.
 - iii. Development of accessible pathways and an accessible all-weather synthetic track surface around the Stratford Education and Recreation Centre (SERC) Site located at 197 Matilda St. and Oakdale Avenue.
 - iv. Identification of municipally owned lands available for affordable/attainable/supportive housing-related developments or sale to deliver outcomes approved in the City's Strategic Priorities.
- d. Evaluation of all budgeted investments and disinvestments in accordance with the following prioritization criteria:
 - i. Creation of new housing units – prioritizing the services directly required to enable more housing (water, wastewater, stormwater and roads).
 - ii. Meeting legislated and regulatory requirements – prioritizing investments to meet legislative requirements including maintaining standards in emergency service response, health and safety, and minimum winter road maintenance standards.
 - iii. Risks, outcomes, or impacts of disinvestments – prioritizing investments where disinvestment or deferment carries a high or very high level of financial, regulatory or public risk.
 - iv. Impact to the public – prioritizing, where possible, investments that directly support affordability or mitigate disinvestment in areas that significantly affect housing access, stability, and/or affordability for Stratford residents.

- v. Stratford's Strategic Priorities - prioritizing items that meet the above criteria and additionally demonstrate the ability to advance the goals of the City's Strategic Priorities in a measurable way.
 - e. Contains no additional staffing requests beyond those positions previously approved by Council.
 - f. Adherence to Council-approved financial policies.
 - g. Disclosure of all deferred and/or deprioritized budget investments that were to be included in the draft 2026 budget, as well as any associated risks/impacts resulting from changes to established service levels.
 - h. That staff continue to pursue opportunities for new grants or other funding sources for existing projects to help mitigate budget impacts for 2026.
2. Work collaboratively with the Mayor throughout the preparation of the 2026 budget, including monthly briefings.
3. The 2026 budget prepared in accordance with this directive will be considered by the Mayor in October 2025 and subsequently issued as the Mayor's draft budget for public feedback and engagement, inclusive of a summary of any amendments made by the Mayor to the draft budget. Upon completion of the public engagement period, the Mayor may make additional amendments before formally issuing the Mayor's Budget for Council adoption.
4. That the 2026 budget for Local Boards and Shared Service providers and which is not under the direct control of Mayor and Council:
- a. Be presented to, and adopted by, Council subsequent to the adoption of the City's 2026 budget; and
 - b. That correspondence be sent to respectfully request that the following Local Boards and Shared Services: Library, Police, UTRCA, Public Health, EMS, investStratford, Destination Stratford, Downtown Stratford Business Improvement Area, and Spruce Lodge submit a 2026 budget limited to their proportionate share of not more than 3.5% net tax levy increase over the 2025 adopted budget.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Ritsma".

Martin Ritsma, Mayor