



## MEDIA RELEASE

**DATE:** May 18, 2017  
**SUBJECT:** Chester Municipality Passes 2017-18  
Operating Budget  
**STATUS:** FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**MUNICIPALITY OF CHESTER** – The Municipality of Chester has regularly enjoyed a healthy financial position, even in periods of slow growth like last year. Although the challenge of slow growth continues, the Municipality has adopted sound Capital and Operating Budgets for the 2017-18 fiscal year.

As usual, the Municipality's strategic priorities are aggressive and reinforce its position as one of the most progressive municipal units in Nova Scotia in terms of sustainability and self-reliant interests.

This year's Budgets focus on long-term financial strategies, building reserves, enhancing service levels, and investing in key capital projects.

The Warden for the Municipality, Allen Webber, describes this year's budget process as one that "not only addresses many immediate needs, but also sets our sights on achieving financial security for many years to come."

Within this year's Budget documents, many of the multi-phase projects initiated last fiscal year are continued as well as a number of new service enhancements are introduced. Of note are inroads for a new wind power project; introduction of a by-law where residents can borrow money from the Municipality to install systems such as drilled wells and efficient heating sources; a new website; changes to winter road maintenance; demolition of the Gold River-Western Shore School and site work to maintain the property as a public space; and the introduction of a new staff position: Strategic Projects Coordinator to assist in moving forward an aggressive Strategic Plan.

Continued initiatives are multiple sewer system upgrades, trail infrastructure improvements, electronic tax billing, the Municipal Plan Review, flood plain modelling for emergency management and planning, and land acquisition for a business industrial park.

With \$3.3 million transferred to Reserves, the Municipality is stepping up its game in terms of planning for future capital spending to address aging infrastructure and new infrastructure needs, and lessening future debt repayment costs, which is forecast to peak within the next couple of years.

These areas of focus are the main reason for the 5% increase in overall expenditures this fiscal year. A 2¢ increase to the residential property tax per \$100 of assessment, a 0.005¢ per \$100 increase to waste collection and disposal area rates, and a flat \$50 increase per year in the universal sewer charge have contributed to a 4% increase in revenue to support the Municipality's priorities for 2017-18.

Except for those mentioned, all other rates, the commercial tax rate, and service fees - like tipping fees at Kaizer Meadow Landfill - are consistent with last year. When comparing property tax rates for similar municipal units in Nova Scotia, the Municipality of Chester holds one of the lowest.

Other budgetary items to note are grants to the community (\$369K including \$45K for Canada 150 community celebrations); more than \$7 million in mandatory contribution to the Province; a financial commitment of \$50,000 towards broadband (highspeed internet) design, and continuation of a needs analysis for a water supply in the Village of Chester (\$500K).

The Budget, along with highlights, is available at the Municipality office, online at [www.chester.ca](http://www.chester.ca), and in the upcoming *Municipal Insight* newsletter

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