

# MUNICIPAL MATTERS

Spring/Summer 2021



## 2021 - 2022 BUDGET OVERVIEW

Council unanimously approved the annual Operating, Water Utility, and Capital Budgets for Region of Queens Municipality at the April 27, 2021 Regular Council meeting. Operating Budget total is \$21,968,378, including Hillsview Acres. The 2021-2022 Water Utility Budget totals \$758,678, and the Capital Budget total is \$22,459,135. This budget will require a tax rate increase of 4 cents in residential, resource and commercial rates. Those on the Liverpool Water Utility will see a one cent decrease in hydrant rates, making their tax rate increase 3 cents per \$100 assessment.

Tax bills have been mailed to property owners, with taxes due on June 1, however, if paid by June 30, 2021, no interest charges will be applied. The budgets are posted online: <https://www.regionofqueens.com/municipal-services/finance/financial-statement>

A few of the projects included in this budget:

- Capital projects of \$22,459,135 are budgeted, pending grant approvals, including upgrades to water and sewer infrastructure on Court and Union Streets, as well as re-routing water distribution lines from the water treatment facility,
- Funds have been allocated in the amount of \$2,500,000 for an outdoor pool in South Queens, to replace the 54 year old Milton Centennial Pool,
- This budget sees a program to support shower agreements with community organizations for community use as requested by the Municipality in times of drought or emergency.

| 2021 - 2022 FISCAL YEAR                         | Districts 1-12                         | District 13 |
|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Residential / Resource</b>                   | \$1.10                                 | \$1.96      |
| <b>Commercial</b>                               | \$2.20                                 | \$3.06      |
| <b>Area Rates: Brooklyn Recreation/Cemetery</b> | District 5 & 6 only add \$0.06 to rate |             |

Tax Rates in Queens are inclusive of services such as street lighting, fire services, solid waste collection, recreation services, and paving, which are often collected as area rates in other municipalities.

## INVESTMENTS IN OUR COMMUNITY 2021 - 2022 BUDGET

### Community Investment Fund Operational Assistance (to date)

|                                       |       |          |
|---------------------------------------|-------|----------|
| Community Food Resource Network       | ..... | \$10,000 |
| Friends of Hank Snow Society          | ..... | \$10,000 |
| North Queens Board of Trade           | ..... | \$10,000 |
| Queens County Fair Association        | ..... | \$10,000 |
| Seaside Recreation & Community Centre | ....  | \$ 5,000 |

### Community Investment Fund Capital Assistance (to date)

|                                     |       |          |
|-------------------------------------|-------|----------|
| Brookfield Mines Trails Association | ..... | \$20,000 |
| Liverpool Baseball Club             | ..... | \$ 5,300 |

### Community Investment Fund Sport Travel/Events (to date)

|                                               |          |
|-----------------------------------------------|----------|
| Liverpool Championship Host Society (Events)  | \$25,000 |
| Sarah Mitton, Athletics Canada Olympic Trials | \$ 250   |

### Tax Exemptions for Community Facilities

Property tax exemption approved for all eligible community groups on their properties is a total of \$237,838.

### Business Façade Improvement Program

Applications are currently being accepted for the 2021 - 2022 Business Façade Program. Queens County businesses wishing to make exterior improvements may be eligible to receive from the Municipality up to 50% of approved application costs, net of HST, to a maximum of \$5,000 per project, subject to satisfactory completion of the approved work, and timely submission of final claim documentation. Most commercial properties are eligible to upgrade many aspects of their visible appearance; from siding and window replacement, to signage and planters - improving your curb-side appeal is the aim. Full details on eligibility is online: <https://www.regionofqueens.com/business/grow-your-business/business-facade-program>. Deadline for first intake period is June 4, 2021, following which a second application period will open on a first come, first served basis.



## A MESSAGE FROM MAYOR NORMAN

This issue of Municipal Matters gives an overview of the 2021 - 2022 annual budget, the first one of our Council's mandate. We reviewed every line in this year's budget, ensuring that required infrastructure maintenance and upgrades, provision of much needed assistance to community organizations and service providers, and funding of current service levels were in place. Much like your household budget, the Municipality has a number of expenses that we have no say in the costs - several of those increased this year at a cost of over \$354,000, including RCMP contract, Housing/Corrections/Roads, Department of Education and waste collection contracts. It was challenging as our assessment roll did not rise enough and despite having raised the deed transfer tax to 1.5%, expenses did not meet revenue. In the end, less money was put into reserves, the budget is very trim and yet there is an increase of 4 cents per \$100 assessment.



2020 was a year to remember, and 2021 has continued with much of the same. All are living with uncertainty, added stress, and facing challenges as we navigate through unprecedented times. I'd like to remind you of the importance of putting kindness first, whether in your words or your actions. We don't know what someone else is facing or feeling; being a helper will get us far. Please find a way to keep peace with your neighbours. While the sentiment is simple, the Golden Rule is a universal principal that many learned as children, and still rings true ... "Do for others as you'd have done for you."

*Darlene Norman*

## COUNCIL MEETING SCHEDULE

Region of Queens Municipality's Council meets on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 9 a.m. and the 4th Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. in Council Chamber at the Municipal Administration Building, 249 White Point Rd., Liverpool, NS. Meetings are open to the public with public health protocols in place. Council meetings are recorded, with audio and a link to the video promptly posted on our website. Those present at meetings may speak for up to 5 minutes during the public comments section of the agenda, or if you are unable to attend, contact your Councillor or Mayor Norman to bring your question forward. Agendas are posted online by noon on the Friday prior to a meeting <https://www.regionofqueens.com/council-governance/council-agendas-minutes-audio>.

**COUNCIL CONTACT INFORMATION** When you have a question about the Municipality, we encourage you to reach out to the Mayor or your Councillor and ask about it. They are open to discussion, passionate about their communities, and genuinely want to hear from residents.

**Maps of Districts:** <https://www.regionofqueens.com/council-governance/electoral-districts-for-cg>

|                                              |              |                                                                                |
|----------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| District 1 <b>Deputy Mayor Kevin Muise</b>   | 902-683-2207 | <a href="mailto:kmuise@regionofqueens.com">kmuise@regionofqueens.com</a>       |
| District 2 <b>Councillor Ralph Gidney</b>    | 902-354-4055 | <a href="mailto:rgidney@regionofqueens.com">rgidney@regionofqueens.com</a>     |
| District 3 <b>Councillor Maddie Charlton</b> | 902-356-3200 | <a href="mailto:mcharlton@regionofqueens.com">mcharlton@regionofqueens.com</a> |
| District 4 <b>Councillor Vicki Amirault</b>  | 902-350-2947 | <a href="mailto:vamirault@regionofqueens.com">vamirault@regionofqueens.com</a> |
| District 5 <b>Councillor Jack Fancy</b>      | 902-354-7216 | <a href="mailto:jfancy@regionofqueens.com">jfancy@regionofqueens.com</a>       |
| District 6 <b>Councillor David Brown</b>     | 902-685-3131 | <a href="mailto:dbrown@regionofqueens.com">dbrown@regionofqueens.com</a>       |
| District 7 <b>Councillor Carl Hawkes</b>     | 902-682-7360 | <a href="mailto:chawkes@regionofqueens.com">chawkes@regionofqueens.com</a>     |

**Mayor Darlene Norman** office: 902-354-3453, cellular: 902-350-3274, [dnorman@regionofqueens.com](mailto:dnorman@regionofqueens.com)

**DID YOU KNOW?** April 1, 2021 marked 25 years since the Amalgamation of the former Town of Liverpool and Municipality of the County of Queens, forming Region of Queens Municipality. In a quarter century, many changes have been made, including recent investments in rural internet in Central, North and West Queens; connection of properties Milton and Brooklyn to the Municipal Water Treatment Plant and the South Queens Sewage Treatment; construction of a multi cell Municipal Solid Waste Facility and Materials Recovery Facility to service the needs of our residents and business community; construction of Queens Place Emera Centre; and much more! Thank you to all the present and former Councils, staff, and residents for making Queens a great place to live!



## YOUR FEEDBACK IS IMPORTANT TO US: DRAFT ACCESSIBILITY PLAN SEEKING INPUT

Our Accessibility Advisory Committee has produced a Queens Municipal Accessibility Plan which is now available to the public for review and comments. Following the provincial direction of all ensuring all public bodies are accessible by 2030, the plan explores six categories with a goal of removing barriers to people with impairments. The categories are built environment, education, employment, goods and services, information and communication, and transportation. If the context allows for access, then disabilities should not put one at a disadvantage. There are challenges to make everything fully accessible as quickly as possible, but Region of Queens Municipality is working towards the provincial 2030 deadline. Provincial grants are being applied for as well as budgeted municipal contributions, and some issues are being dealt with at almost no cost, such as digital accessibility and hiring practices. Find the plan online at <https://www.regionofqueens.com/municipal-services/planning/accessibility> or call for an alternative format. Reach out to Elise Johnston, Accessibility Coordinator, [ejohnston@regionofqueens.com](mailto:ejohnston@regionofqueens.com), phone: 902-354-3455 for more information.

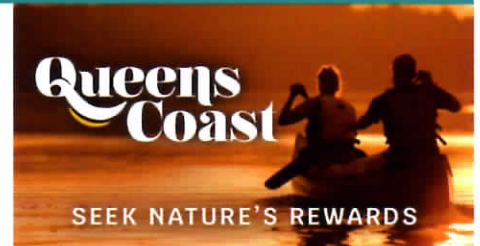
## SUPPORTING COMMUNITY: FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO LOCAL FIRE DEPARTMENTS INCREASED

In Queens County, all five of the fire departments are made up of devoted volunteers. They are well trained, skilled and dedicated to keeping their communities safe. In March, 2021, the Fire Chiefs made a presentation to Council, requesting additional annual funding support, noting that much of their time is currently spent fundraising to cover the costs of equipment, training, and necessary equipment and supplies such as turnout gear and air packs. Council approved an additional 2 cents per \$100 assessment to be applied to all tax rates in Queens County in support of the five volunteer fire departments. Prior to this increase, 2 cents per \$100 assessment was being collected for a truck fund. With this increase the Municipality now invests more than \$1.3 million in fire protection each year.



## QUEENS COAST - SPREADING THE WORD ABOUT OUR QUALITY OF LIFE AND NATURAL ASSETS

Be on the lookout for our new highway signs! Brand new Queens Coast signs will be installed on Highway 103 at the west and east boundaries of Queens County. The current Liverpool signs at exit 19 and 20A are also being replaced with a new design. A Queens Coast marketing campaign is being rolled out this spring/summer including online and traditional media ads along with a fun video series. They capture how our residents and visitors too can seek nature's rewards - watch for them!



Here's a sneak peek at one of the highway signs, coming soon!

## BYLAW 18: DEED TRANSFER TAX AMENDMENT - FIRST IN A DECADE

Our Deed Transfer Tax Bylaw will see its rate increase to 1.5%, effective June 1, 2021. It is estimated it will generate an additional \$150,000 operational revenue in 2021-2022. First reading of Bylaw 18 was on April 13, 2021, and second reading was May 11, 2021. The Deed Transfer Tax will be applied to most deeds conveyed in RQM. The Deed Transfer Tax has been 1% since 2010.

## LOW INCOME TAX EXEMPTIONS

Tax exemptions of \$250 for 2021-2022 property taxes are available for households with combined incomes less than \$24,624, subject to the application guidelines. If you think you may qualify this year, please contact the Finance Department at 902-354-3453 to obtain an application or download the PDF by visiting <https://www.regionofqueens.com/municipal-services/finance/property-taxes/tax-exemptions> Application Deadline: February 28, 2022



## PROMOTING DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION: SURVEY & SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM NOW OPEN

Our Diversity and Inclusion Action Team is looking for your feedback and insight! They are conducting a community survey to learn more about the diversity and inclusion successes and challenges in our Queens community. The survey can be found at <https://forms.gle/vottJYrYHjBptaLB9> or there is a fillable PDF on the website <https://www.regionofqueens.com/council-governance/diversity-inclusion> that can be completed and sent to Eric Levy, Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator at [elevy@regionofqueens.com](mailto:elevy@regionofqueens.com).

If your Queens County based non profit organization has an idea for a project, program or some other innovation that will help with inclusion, the Diversity and Inclusion Action Team may be able to provide a grant to help! Guidelines and an application form are on the website, listed above.

## INCREASED ACCESS-ABILITY AT MUNICIPAL FACILITIES & PARKS

Among the first priority areas of Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act is the Built Environment. Region of Queens' Accessibility Coordinator Elise Johnston has reviewed more than 16 municipal facilities and properties, with more upcoming, and has recommended improvements to meet the standards. In March and April, several accessibility upgrades were made, increasing accessibility at Queens Place Emera Centre, including a push button door from the foyer to the arena, seat backs on the accessible washrooms, and internationally recognizable signs for elevator and washrooms. The projects were supported by a provincial Community ACCESS-Ability grant, with a municipal contribution of 1/3 funding. As the weather continues to warm, municipal accessible parking stalls will be improved, and there are plans for improvements at Beach Meadows Beach, pending grant approval. In this year's budget, Council approved \$100,000 in funding for upgrades to Town Hall Arts & Cultural Centre in Liverpool, which will enable many more people of varying abilities to enjoy and participate in a variety of activities.

## IT'S TIME FOR DAILY TICK CHECKS

Black legged ticks are very common in Nova Scotia and carry Lyme disease, a bacterial infection caused by their bite, although not all black legged ticks carry the bacteria. Make checking for ticks part of your daily routine ... check yourself, loved ones, and pets, and be 'tick smart' outdoors by keeping grassy areas mowed short, cover as much of your skin as possible, and apply an insect repellent with DEET or Icaridin on clothing and exposed skin. For more information about Lyme disease and preventing black legged tick bites, go to <https://novascotia.ca/dhw/cdpc/lyme.asp>. To have a tick identified, please visit [eTick.ca](http://eTick.ca).



**In most cases, a tick carrying the bacteria that can cause Lyme disease must attach and feed for at least 24 hours before the bacteria can be transmitted.**

## STAY INFORMED: COVID-19 VACCINATION CLINICS, CASE COUNTS, AND UPDATES

Adaptability is a characteristic of residents of Queens County, and now, more than a year after the beginning of the Pandemic, residents have experienced a variety of changes in their lives and have been very resilient. Public Health protocols change frequently, adapting to keep Nova Scotians safe. Sometimes Public Health protocols may lead to changes in municipal programs and services. In those cases, information is posted on the municipal website and social media pages, and if it pertains to Queens Place Emera Centre, updates are posted on the Queens Place Emera Centre website and social media pages. Please check our website <http://www.regionofqueens.com>

**For accurate, up-to-date information about vaccination clinics, current COVID-19 cases and Public Health guidelines in Nova Scotia, check the Province's website: <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/>**