



Adam A. Donaldson @adamadonaldson

Jan 25 · 69 tweets · [adamadonaldson/status/1618240519582408704](https://twitter.com/adamadonaldson/status/1618240519582408704)

It's Budget Day in [#Guelph](#)! Council will race to finish before the [#ONStorm](#) hits (Welcome Mayor Guthrie followers 😊), will we all get the work done before getting snowed in? Stay tuned! The meeting technically starts at 9 am, but the open session starts at 9:30.

Here's the Preview:



So it looks like the closed meeting was brief. We're all just sitting here in the chambers counting down to 9:30.



Mayor Guthrie calls the meeting to order.

Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and General Nature Thereof? Nope.

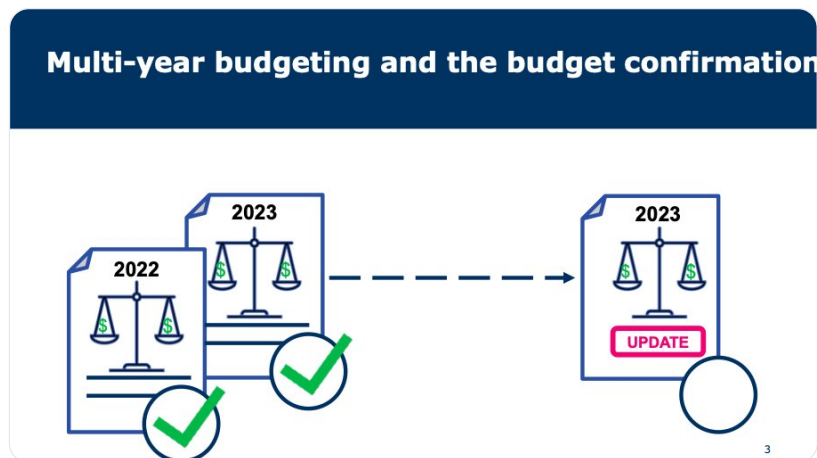
Guthrie notes that Cllrs Billings, Allt and Caton are appearing virtually even if you can't see them on the live stream.

In case you forgot why we're here, Stewart starts the presentation:

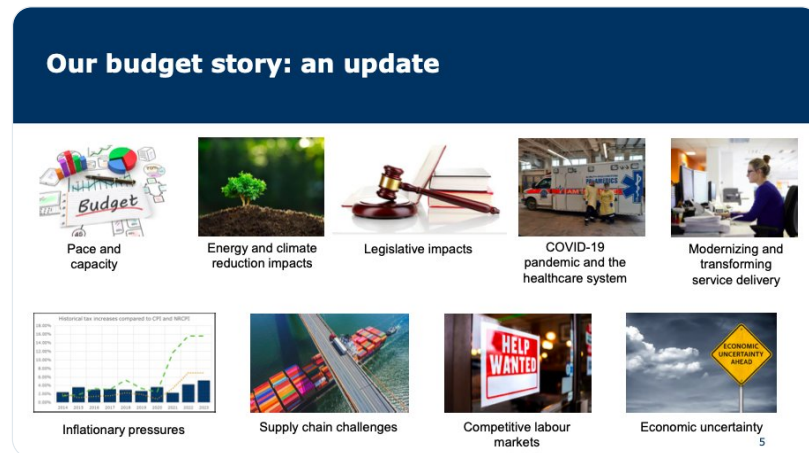


Stewart notes that this is the first budget confirmation meeting since council has moved to multi-year budgeting. He assures that this is more predictable, more efficient in staff time, and gives council more of a long-term view. It doesn't limit flexibility though.

This is where we are pictorially.



Stewart notes that there have been many new pressures introduced since the two-year budget was passed in Dec 2021. Inflationary pressures, COVID, the environment, economic conditions, and legislative changes have created issues that need to be addressed.



Trevor Lee, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer Corporate Services, takes over to go into further detail about some of those challenges. Fun fact: Price volatility has been higher since the pandemic than any time in last 20 years.

Lee notes that there are internal pressures that have made tax increase higher than the Consumer Price Index even before the pandemic, most of that tied to infrastructure renewal and city building.

There will be a surplus in compensation this year at the City. Good news? Not really, it's a reflection of how hard it is to hire right now, especially for part-time jobs. Lee says that labour shortages will continue in 2023, but will likely start to abate.

Bank of Canada has rapidly increased rate of borrowing, which will have a future impact on the City but not this year since there's no plan to take on debt in 2023. High cost of borrowing also influences business growth and how much people can spend.

Oh yeah, [#onpoli](#) is causing some issues in the budget.



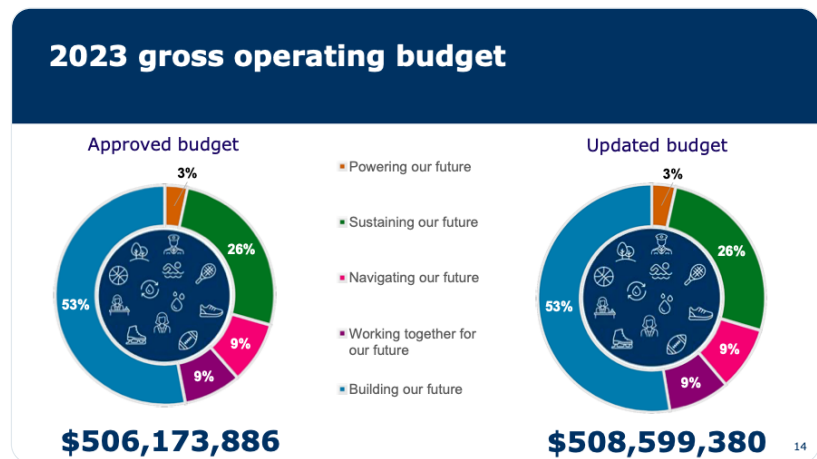
The City responded to 40 calls for feedback from Queen's Park in 2022, which is about double the usual load. Also, Lee says there's more coming in 2023.

Budget update in 2023 in one graphic:



Impacts of Bill 23 amounts to about \$1.5 million for 2023, but only \$500k of that will have an impact on the levy increase. The City is also looking to accelerate the addition of resources to GWPS, while also taking a pause on expanding the operating expense for SECC & new GPL.

Although the 2023 plan adds about \$2 million more, the effect on the overall percentages of investment remains unchanged.



Police, Library, Elliott and WDGPH have all confirmed their 2023 budget. No change has been requested from DGBA. GRCA budget not yet approved (will be next month). County Social Services has added new spending though to support homelessness initiatives.

Local Boards and Shared Services










Shanna O'Dwyer, Acting General Manager Finance/Treasurer warns that without "significant" increase in provincial funding, social services will be an issue in 2024 as more pressure is put on Guelph and the County to fill the gap.


How do we get 4.96 per cent?

	2023 approved		2023 update	
	Total net tax impact	Tax levy increase	Total net tax impact	Tax levy increase
City	\$9,373,567	3.35%	\$8,309,736	2.97%
Legislative impacts	-	-	\$773,580	0.28%
LBSS	\$5,085,465	1.82%	\$4,792,488	1.71%
Total	\$14,459,032	5.17%	\$13,875,804	4.96%


Next, Tara Baker, Acting GM of Information Technology, will talk about the Capital budget.

These are the themes of the capital budget. The down arrow for transit is because of delays in construction, not a lack of spending. Also, water projects were delayed so that they could be better aligned with other construction projects.


What has changed through the 2023 capital budget prioritization?




Keeping our assets in a state of good repair




Investment in transit and active transportation



Water and wastewater treatment








Improving customer service through technology

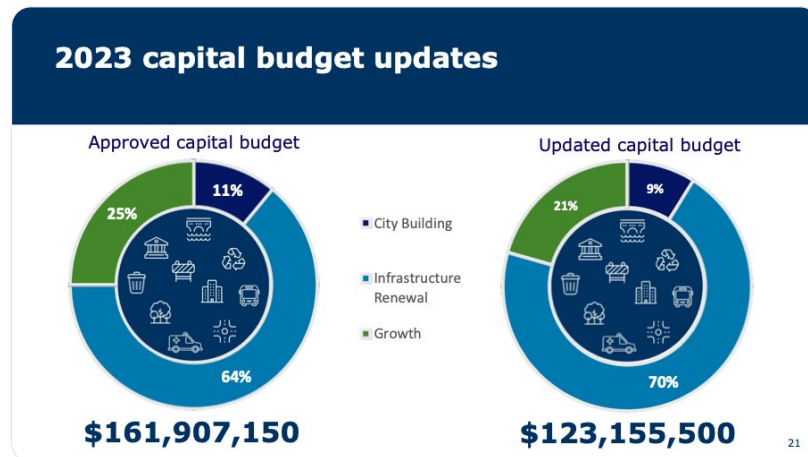


Lessening our environmental impact

2023 Capital re-set impacts

So the result for 2023 is more funding on infrastructure renewal and less on city building and growth. This change is nominal when you look at the total 10-year plan and the various places that capital costs are budgeted from.



In summery:

2023 budget update: tax levy by City and LBSS

Expense category	2023 City	2023 LBSS	TOTAL
Net operating investment	\$9,625,366	\$4,047,538	\$13,672,904
Assessment growth	(\$2,468,950)	(\$1,216,050)	(\$3,685,000)
Net impact before capital	2.56%	1.01%	3.57%
Capital investment	\$1,926,900	\$1,961,000	\$3,887,900
Capital impact	0.69%	0.70%	1.39%
Total net tax impact	3.25%	1.71%	4.96%
User Rate Increase			2.73%

23

Stewart says that the budget process reminds everyone of the amazing work of staff on such a complex endeavour. Notes that the 4.96% is below the approve 2023 rate. No cancellations, just delays.

We will now go to the dozen or so delegations, including a pretty powerful lobbying effort from Guelph Pickleballphiles.

First, we've got Guelph Wellington Seniors Association president Pat Gage. She says post-COVID it's hard to find volunteers & appreciates that thee are challenging times. They'd like to talk about moving forward with the Old Age Strategy approved in 2012, & getting more funding.

Cllr O'Rourke asks if there's a difference btw Older Adult Strategy and Age Friendly City. Another GWSA says the former focuses on older adults and the latter focuses on everyone. She says helping seniors helps everyone.

Next, Shakiba Shayani, Prez & SEO of Guelph Chamber of Commerce. She says that the business community are concerned about lack of affordable housing (impact on workforce) and that they're not seeing service levels as commensurate with taxes being paid.

Shayani also addresses her role as co-chair of the Mayor's Task Force, noting that while their work seems downtown-centric this moment, the work they're doing will have benefits for the whole city.

Strategic Advisory Group on Downtown Guelph			
Vision: A thriving Guelph where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • everyone feels safe and everyone feels like they belong; • Downtown is prosperous, activated and welcoming; • effective health and social service delivery is provided. 			
Action Plan:			
Immediate Term			
Activity	Objectives	Tactics	Cost
Accelerate permanent supportive housing	Ensure the success of Stepping Stone's Grace Gardens project, 10 Shelldale project, Wyndham House's Bellevue project and County of Wellington's Delhi project.	Create and execute an advocacy strategy to secure operational funding.	Funds secured to support advocacy strategy
	A successful Home for Good campaign that raises \$5 million.	Amplify and achieve the Home for Good campaign.	No Current Funding Ask. (Total campaign goal: \$5 million July 2022, Guelph City Council pledged to match public donations to the campaign up to \$500,000.)

Preview: Shayani says that there will be a request of \$150k to do this work later on, but concedes that it's probably not enough, and recognises the irony of having concerns about the levy increase and asking for more spending.

Cllr Caron asks if Shayani has any insights from fellow Chambers in dealing with social issues. She says there's a leadership vacuum that Chambers are trying to fill, and Guelph is a leader in this area in terms of co-ordinating with stakeholders.

Cllr Goller asks about the ask. Shayani says the table was in anticipation of discussing the additional levy, but there acknowledges that there's still some work to do and more information they need, but was hoping to show council the goalposts.

O'Rourke asks about Economic and Tourism Strategy, where should council put a focus? Shayani says some other delegates will speak to that, but the whole network is stronger when they rally around strategic objectives, and that needs to be resourced.

Cllr O'Rourke asks where we can shop the public just how much the local governments and community is spending on homelessness. Shayani says the numbers are out there and they're clear, so it should be easy to paint the bigger picture.

Next is Helen Fishburn, CEO of Canadian Mental Health Association Waterloo Wellington. She says she felt very strongly about being here today, and implores the City to continue to take action. She notes that thousands of people in city can't get mental health help they need.

Fishburn concedes that mental health and addictions are normally a provincial responsibility, but nothing about this is normal. These issues need to be the priority of all levels of government because this is a life or death issue.

Cllr Busuttil asks if the Advisory Committee has appeared at the Social Services Committee in the County. Fishburn says yes, and they've been great partners and again notes that this is a problem for all levels of government.

O'Rourke says the resources seem to be going to people in crisis, is there an ask coming to fund the additional 8 hours of IMPACT? Fishburn says that's part of the plan, but there's also a need to cover a need in ongoing and follow-up care.

Fishburn adds that the earlier you can invest in wellness, the better the outcome is further down the continuum. The problem is that the system is saturated and the problem is spilling out onto the streets.

Cllr Allt asks if Fishburn wants the City to broaden the mandate because he's concerned about defacto-downloading. Fishburn says she understands those concerns, and the request is meant to further illustrate that this is everyone's problem.

Downer asks from an admin-POV if its not better to go through the County, Guelph has no social services staff. Fishburn says the motion coming later will explore creative options. There's an opportunity to think outside the box; the world is different & we need to think different

Next is Sarah Haanstra from Guelph Community Health Centre. She says "ditto" to everything Fishburn said, and turns her attention to laying out the importance of the Welcoming Streets program.

Busuttil asks if there's current a community benefit agreement for Welcoming Streets. Haanstra says that they've had year-to-year funding, which is unique, but they do want to look to get multi-year funding so they can plan better.

Cllr Klassen asks about the benefits from Welcoming Streets. Haanstra says people call Welcoming Streets gives people an option for someone to call other than the police, and it's become that reflexive for business owners.

O'Rourke asks "What's the harm?" is approving another one-year of funding for Welcoming Streets until things like supportive housing and expanded hours at Royal City Mission come online and we can see the impact?

Haanstra she hopes there's an immediate impact, but practically speaking its hard to hire people on contracts, and their mandate is to respond to emerging needs and trends, so if things change, CHC will also change.

We appear to be having tech issues with the councillors appearing virtually, so we're going to take a five minute break as staff get stuff sorted out.

With tech issues seemingly resolved, we begin again with Dominica McPherson from the Guelph and Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination.

McPherson says that many people in Guelph have poor housing, and its hard to find new facilities given the pressures. She's advocating that the City hold on the affordable housing reserve even though Bill 23 strips DCs, Parkland fees and CBCs from such projects.

Goller asks if there any targets for rent-gearred-to-income units? McPherson says that's research she would welcome and has pushed for the City to do that kind of research. She says that the needs is "immense" though.

Next up is Kristel Manes from the Business Centre Guelph Wellington. She requests again the \$300k in funding to help achieve economic goals. City approved the strategy, but offered no operational funds for business services agencies to make it happen.

Alison Crumblehulme from Innovation Guelph is next. She also asks for the funding for business support organisations in order to enact the economic development and tourism strategy. Businesses could use the assist right now.

Crumblehulme says don't be fooled by announcements when her group gets funding from the Feds or Province because that goes back out the door to members.

O'Rourke asks if Innovation Guelph is currently receiving funding from the City. Crumblehulme says not directly for operating expenses. O'Rourke asks if that's common, and Crumblehulme says her group is one of three in Ontario that doesn't get municipal funding.

Barbara McPhee from the North End Harvest Market has taken herself off the list, so we go to David J.A. Douglas. He recommends that the budget needs to be communicated in a different way. People have limited knowledge about local economic impact of provincial decisions.

Busuttil agrees and asks Douglas if he has any suggestions. Douglas says he's hardly an expert, but imagines social media can play a role in engaging people, especially those that are completely unplugged from the democratic process.

Next, a trio from the Pickleball Guelph Association starting with Elden Morais. The PGA (heh) is asking for council's help with this fast growing sport. (So fast growing that the association was only started last year). Apparently, there are 120 people in the waiting list.

Fun fact: There is no dedicated pickleball court in any of Guelph's 90 parks, although the City is graciously allowing tennis courts to be multiuse (sport).

Another fun fact: In the same space for a baseball diamond, you can make 40 pickleball courts.

Cllr Gibson asks if there are tourism opportunities for pickleball. One of the PGA members says there's no place that they can organise around because there's no dedicated court. Tournaments can draw 1,200 players and thousands more in terms of families travelling.

Busuttil says she's looking at this as equity of access, so what's the cost to get involved? Morais says it's relatively low cost to play pickleball in terms of equipment, and they're looking at those economic barriers. The big one though is no real place to play.

Busuttil asks if the PGA is pressing school boards for space. Morais says UGDSB is providing a play space a couple of times a night, which is great. Again, the challenge is where to play. Priory Park has some underused tennis courts they're looking at.

Allt says he's been approached by both pickleball and tennis players, and there's concerns that hybrid courts don't meet either groups needs. Thompson concedes that there are issues because there are some big differences in the games, hence need for dedicated courts.

Guthrie says he doesn't want to get bogged down with technocratic questions about pickleball. The Parks and Rec Master Plan is coming, and that might be a better place for those queries.

Downer asks if tennis has a similar association to the PGA. Thompson says he's not aware with of one.

With that Guthrie calls a 30 minute lunch break.



[@threadreaderapp](#), unroll please!

...