

2018-19 Municipal Budget Highlights

The Halifax Regional Municipality is a model of fiscal discipline and economic progress. But unlike many cities in our competitive set, which have substantially larger revenue sources, Halifax is essentially required to do more with less.

Given the somewhat restricted opportunity for cost-sharing with the province, modest room for tax increases, and few revenue sources other than property taxes, the municipality has very limited options to raise operating revenues.

A measured, responsible, and long-term approach is critical to sustained growth.

Key Programs and Capital Projects for 2018-19

Integrated Mobility Plan: Approximately \$39 million will be invested in transit, transportation and public works projects to improve livability and movement across the Halifax region.

Transit: There will be a substantial investment, through both operating and capital budgets, in transit services (\$132 million), including the introduction of new transit technology, replacement of conventional buses and expanded hours for the Alderney Ferry service.

Recreation: Investment in our recreation infrastructure and services, across the municipality, will enhance customer service for residents.

Fire: Continuing to enhance fire safety presence with the hiring of 16 additional firefighters in 2018-19.

Equitable access to municipal services: Ensure the Halifax region is a diverse and inclusive community that supports all residents by providing leadership and guidance to staff through training and education.

Performance excellence: The municipality is investing in staff training and focusing on process improvements for 10 strategic programs, aimed at increasing efficiencies and savings for 2018-19.

Tax Bills

Regional Council recognizes to maintain or enhance current services moving forward, modest residential and commercial tax increases will be required.

At the direction of Regional Council, the average single-family home tax bill will increase by \$37 or 1.97 per cent to \$1,917 in 2018-19, in line with or below forecasted rates of inflation and economic growth. Average commercial taxes will fall by 1.1%

Services, costs and compensation continue to rise at a faster pace than annual growth in revenue received from property taxes. If taxes were not raised, there would be a \$10 million shortfall to provide the approved 2018-19 services.

Key Highlights

- The municipality has entered the second year of a multi-year approach to budgeting. This strategy positions the municipality to take better advantage of growth opportunities and mitigate forecasted challenges to its fiscal health.
- Regional Council is taking a balanced approach to meeting its financial needs by:
 - Improving services while mitigating the escalating pace of service costs
 - Approving slight reductions in the capital budget to better align with capacity to deliver
 - Continuing investment in state of good repair to ensure our existing assets are well maintained
 - Moderately increasing residential taxes and decreasing average commercial tax
 - Increasing reserves to prepare for future obligations and new opportunities
- Since amalgamation, the municipality's debt has dropped by approximately 30 per cent, to one of the lowest municipal per-capita debts in the country.

Summary of Municipal Operations

Business Units	2017-18	2018-19
Public Safety Service:		
Fire & Emergency Services	59.5	72.0
Halifax Regional Police	86.6	95.6
RCMP	26.0	26.2
Total	172.1	193.7
Public Services:		
Halifax Transit	115.4	115.6
Library Services	26.9	27.0
Corporate & Customer Services	62.0	64.3
Parks & Recreation	41.0	43.0
Planning & Development	20.1	20.4
Transportation & Public Works	98.8	100.3
Total	364.3	370.7
Governance and Support Services:		
Auditor General	1.0	1.0
CAO	4.6	4.9
Finance & Asset Management	20.3	21.3
Human Resource Services	6.6	6.9
Legal, Insurance & Risk Management	11.7	12.1
Total	44.3	46.2
Total	580.6	610.6
Corporate Services (Fiscal)	162.2	150.0
Total	742.8	760.6

Municipal Expenditures

Municipal Expenditures	2017-18	2018-19
Gross Expenditures	895.7	918.5
Less: Mandatory Provincial Costs	-152.9	-157.9
Municipal Expenditures	742.8	760.6

Average Residential Property Tax Bill

Average Tax Bill	2017-18	2018-19
Residential:		
Average Assessment (Single Family Home)	\$231,300	\$234,500
Urban Tax Rate	0.8130	0.8175
Average Tax Bill	\$1,880	\$1,917
Commercial:		
Average Assessment	\$1,445,000	\$1,401,000
Urban Tax Rate	2.8690	2.9255
Average Tax Bill	\$41,457	\$40,986