

# Reference Committee Staff Report

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To: Finance and Responsible Governance Committee

Subject: 2026 Business Plan and Budget – Service Partners

Date: November 26, 2025

Ward: All

Department Head Approval: C. Smith, Interim Director of Finance

Executive Management Approval: J. Schmidt, General Manager of Community and Corporate Services  
B. Araniyasundaran, General Manager of Infrastructure and Growth Management  
R. James-Reid, General Manager Access Barrie  
I. Peters, Director of Legal Services  
M. Banfield, Executive Director of Development Services

CAO Approval: M. Prowse, Chief Administrative Officer

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## **Recommendation(s):**

### **Strong Mayor Budget**

This report is being presented by Finance on behalf of Mayor Alex Nuttall in accordance with Section 284.16 of the Municipal Act and Section 7 of Ontario Regulation 530/22.

### **Service Partner Budget Approvals**

1. That the 2026 budget request from the Barrie Police Services Board presented on page 252 of the 2026 Business Plan, with a net tax supported municipal funding requirement of \$78.4M, be approved.
2. That the 2026 budget request from the Barrie Public Library Board presented on page 252 of the 2026 Business Plan, with a net tax supported municipal funding requirement of \$10.4M and \$169K of Development Charges funding, be approved.
3. That the 2026 budget request from the County of Simcoe, including contributions to the County of Simcoe Capital Reserve, presented on page 252 of the 2026 Business Plan, with a net tax supported municipal funding requirement of \$35.0M, be approved.

4. That the 2026 budget request from the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority presented on page 252 of the 2026 Business Plan, with a net tax supported municipal funding requirement of \$389.5K, and \$1.2M of water rate funding, be approved.
5. That the 2026 budget request from the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority presented on page 252 of the 2026 Business Plan, with a net tax supported municipal funding requirement of \$487.8K, and \$86.1K of water rate funding, be approved.
6. That the 2026 budget request from the Barrie Area Physician Recruitment presented on page 252 of the 2026 Business Plan, with a net tax supported municipal funding requirement of \$150K, be approved.
7. That the 2026 budget estimate for the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit presented on page 252 of the 2026 Business Plan, with a net tax supported municipal funding requirement of \$2.4M, be approved.
8. That the City's County of Simcoe capital projects be amended to reflect the 2026 budget requests as follows:
  - a) That the budget for project FI1034 – County of Simcoe Capital Program – Paramedic Services (Active) be reduced by \$1,389,096, from \$2,345,096 to \$956,000.
  - b) That the budget for project FI1035 – County of Simcoe Capital Program – Long Term Care & Senior Services (Active) be reduced by \$2,734,847, from \$3,010,847 to \$276,000.
  - c) That the budget for project FI1036 – County of Simcoe Capital Program – Social Housing & Community Services (Active) be reduced by \$9,911,621, from \$11,173,621 to \$1,262,000.

### **Council and Staff authorization requests**

9. That the City Clerk be authorized to prepare all necessary by-laws to implement the above recommendations.

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### **Executive Summary:**

**The purpose of this report is to provide information regarding the 2026 Business Plan & Budget for Service Partners that the Mayor is presenting under the Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act.** The guidelines and principles provided in the Mayoral Decision MD013-25 on June 24th, 2025 (see Appendix "A") as well as the Mayoral Direction to City Staff, Direction Number MDIR001-24 on July 12<sup>th</sup> 2024 (see Appendix "B") were communicated to Service Partners as guidance to inform their 2026 Budget submissions.

The Service Partner portion of the budget included in this report is being considered at the November 26<sup>th</sup>, December 3rd and December 10th meetings, with presentations given by selected Service Partners occurring on November 26<sup>th</sup>.

As the details related to the Service Partners annual budgets are extensive, additional

budget binder pages have been prepared and distributed to each member of Council to assist in making informed decisions, which can be added to the Service Partners tab of the 2026 Business Plan binders that have been previously distributed.

## Key Findings:

**The Service Partners budget is \$127.2M, resulting in a 2.80% tax levy increase.**

The net tax levy requirement of \$127.2M for 2026 is an increase of \$9.0M, or 7.60%, over 2025 (\$118.2M). This represents a 2.80% tax levy increase to the City of Barrie. The following table shows how the increase is distributed among the various partners. More detail on the Service Partner increases can be found on pages 251-254 of the 2026 Business Plan Operating binder.

Description	Tax Levy Increase/ (Decrease)	% Change	Tax Rate Impact
Conservation Authorities	\$ 25,457	2.99%	0.01%
County of Simcoe (including County Capital Reserve Transfer)	\$ 2,093,871	6.37%	0.65%
Barrie Public Library	\$ 541,164	5.50%	0.17%
Barrie Police Services	\$ 6,163,685	8.53%	1.92%
Physician Recruitment	\$ 90,000	150.00%	0.03%
Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit	\$ 72,510	3.14%	0.02%
<b>Service Partner Budget Requests (including County Capital Reserve Transfer)</b>	<b>\$ 8,986,686</b>	<b>7.60%</b>	<b>2.80%</b>

**There is a change in the County of Simcoe’s budget request based on anticipated updates to the Municipal Shared Services Agreement.**

The change impacts the capital budget requirements by making payments toward County of Simcoe capital works over the estimated useful life of the asset. In practice, this means paying over a longer time period than the current agreement, which lowers the annual capital requirement from the City. As a result, the contribution to the County of Simcoe Capital Reserve can be decreased to reflect the reduced annual requirement for capital related payments to the County. Year over year changes can be found on page 252 of the 2026 Business Plan Operating binder.

## Financial Implications:

The financial impacts of the 2026 Business Plan related to Service Partners are addressed in the analysis section of this report.

## Alternatives:

This report is presented by Finance staff on behalf of the Mayor, following guidelines and principles provided in the Mayoral Decision MD013-25 on June 24th, 2025 (see Appendix “A”) as well as the Mayoral Direction to City Staff, Direction Number MDIR001-24 on July 12th 2024 (see Appendix “B”). As such, there are no alternatives presented for consideration.

## Strategic Plan Alignment:

The annual business plan and budget reflects the efforts to implement Council's strategic goals. The recommended motions provided in this staff report are an opportunity for Council to ensure the City's resources continue to be expended in a manner consistent with these goals.

Affordable Place to Live	X	
Community Safety	X	
Thriving Community	X	
Infrastructure Investments	X	
Responsible Governance	X	

## Additional Background Information and Analysis:

Not Applicable.

## Consultation and Engagement:

The City worked with Oraclepoll Research to conduct a statistically valid phone survey of residents to gather feedback on key questions related to the 2026 Business Plan & Budget. The phone survey included 1,000 Barrie residents from all 10 Wards (both cellular and landlines). A summary of results is included in Appendix "C".

## Environmental and Climate Change Impact Matters:

There are no environmental or climate change impact matters related to the recommendations. The 2026 Business Plan and Budget reflects various initiatives and capital projects that support a more sustainable community, features that mitigate climate change risks, and measures that promote adaptation to climate change.

## Appendix:

Appendix A - Mayoral Decision – MD013-25 – June 24, 2025

Appendix B – Mayoral Direction – MDIR001-24 – July 12, 2024

Appendix C – Oraclepoll Research Phone Survey Results

## Report Author:

C. Gillespie, Senior Manager Corporate Finance and Investments

J. Kuehl, Manager of Business Planning and Budget

## File #:

C11

## Pending #:

Not Applicable



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## Mayoral Decision

Under Bill 3, the *Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act, 2022*, which amended the *Municipal Act, 2001*,

I, Alex Nuttall, Mayor of the City of Barrie will be including the following matters as part of the Mayor's 2026 Business Plan & Budget for Council's consideration:

- That the current direction of a 0% tax increase for the 2026 City operating Budget remain;
- That 1% of funding currently allocated to the Infrastructure Investment Fund, be reallocated to a new reserve specifically to fund future capital expenditures for intergovernmental projects starting in 2027 for a period of 10 years and identified as a separate levy on the property tax bill;
- That the Theatre Reserve be renamed the Performing Arts Centre Reserve;
- That all funds received through the sale of Dean Avenue be allocated to the Performing Arts Centre Reserve;
- That the Alectra dividends currently allocated to the Theatre Reserve, be reallocated to the annual operating Budget;
- That the annual Recreation and Culture Department Operating Budget include funding in the amount of \$30,000 for the Barrie Sports Hall of Fame;
- That the Allandale Recreation Centre Refurbishment project (Z281) be reduced in the amount of \$45M from the 2026 Business Plan & Budget;
- That the Spirit Catcher Park Development Project (000316) be removed from the 2026 Business Plan & Budget and that staff be directed to introduce a new Park Development Project around the Performing Arts Centre project in the 2026 Business Plan & Budget;
- That the budget associated with the Barrie Public Library location at the new multi-use facility be reduced by \$5M; and
- That as per Council directions, a total cost avoidance of \$172.5 million has been achieved through efficiencies related to the Performing Arts Centre and amalgamating the two south end multi-use facilities into one.

Dated at Barrie on the 24<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2025.

"ORIGINAL SIGNED"

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Mayor Alex Nuttall



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## Mayoral Direction to City Staff

Section 284.3 of the *Municipal Act* provides the Head of Council the authority to give direction to staff in writing.

I, Alex Nuttall, Mayor of the City of Barrie have provided the following direction to staff:

In accordance with Section 284.16 of the *Municipal Act* 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 and provide a proposed budget to Council for its consideration:

1. In accordance with Section 284.3 of the Act, the Mayor hereby directs the Chief Financial Officer or designate to:
  - a) Prepare and present the 2025 Budget and Business Plan and 10-Year Capital Plan based on the following:
    - i) A 0% increase to the City's Operating Budget;
    - ii) Continue with the Infrastructure Investment Funding increase identified in Council motion 23-G-023 beyond 2025
    - iii) That a ten-year Capital Plan be prepared that includes a one-year capital budget, a four-year forecast, and a five-year capital outlook, addressing both growth and renewal of infrastructure, with consideration to the maintenance of the City's AA+ credit rating and fiscal health
    - iv) Demonstrated connection of budget investments to deliver outcomes in the 2022-2026 Strategic Plan;
    - iv) Adherence to the City's Financial Policies;
  - b) Work collaboratively with the Mayor throughout the preparation of the 2025 budget, providing regular updates.
2. The service partners be requested to submit a 2025 budget that is in alignment with the principles and targets of the Mayor's Budget



3. The following schedule be established for presentation and consideration of the Mayor's and Service Partner's Budget:

Budget Activity	Start Date	End Date
Department Operating/ Capital Entry	May 20, 2024	June 28, 2024
Department Budget Commentary and Supporting Material	July 2, 2024	July 26, 2024
Finance/Treasurer Budget Review and Final Adjustments	July 2024	September 2024
EMT and Mayor Budget Review, Business Plan Binder Development, Mayor Sign-Off and Delivery	September 2024	November 18, 2024
Finance and Responsible Governance – City Services Budget Presentation	November 20, 2024	November 20, 2024
General Committee	December 4, 2024	December 4, 2024
Council approval -City Operating and Capital	December 11, 2024	December 11, 2024
Service Partner Budgets provided to Council	January 8, 2025	January 8, 2025
Service Partner Budget Presentations to Council	January 15, 2025	January 15, 2025
General Committee consideration	January 22, 2025	January 22, 2025
Adoption by Council	February 12, 2025	February 12, 2025

4. That the Chief Financial Officer be directed to prepare and present the 2026 Budget and Business Plan and 10-Year Capital Plan in October 2025 and request to the Service partners to prepare and present their budgets/funding requests to Council in December 2025 in accordance with the parameters established in paragraphs 1 and 2 noted above, unless otherwise directed.

Dated at the City of Barrie, this 12th day of July, 2024.

"ORIGINAL SIGNED BY"

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor Alex Nuttall



## 2025 Budget Survey Report



September 2025



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# Methodology & Logistics

## Background & Overview

The following represents the findings from a September 2025 telephone survey of N=1000 voting age City of Barrie residents (18 years of age or older) conducted by Oraclepoll Research Limited for The City of Barrie. The purpose of the research was to gather opinions from residents on issues related to the 2026 City budget process. This report includes an executive summary of the findings.

## Study Sample

A dual frame random database (RDD) was used for the sample that was inclusive of landline and cellular telephone numbers. The sample was stratified to ensure that there was an equal distribution across each of the ten City Wards. The survey screened to ensure respondents were 18 years of age or older and were residents of each Ward. Gender and age samples were also monitored to ensure they reflected the demographic characteristics of the community.

### *SAMPLE BREAKDOWN*

Ward 1	N=100	10%
Ward 2	N=100	10%
Ward 3	N=100	10%
Ward 4	N=100	10%
Ward 5	N=100	10%
Ward 6	N=100	10%
Ward 7	N=100	10%
Ward 8	N=100	10%
Ward 9	N=100	10%
Ward 10	N=100	10%

## Survey Method

All surveys were conducted by telephone using live operators at the Oraclepoll call center facility. A total of 20% of all interviews were monitored and the management of Oraclepoll Research Limited supervised 100%. The survey was conducted using computer-assisted techniques of telephone interviewing (CATI) and random number selection (RDD).

## Logistics

Surveys were conducted by telephone at the Oraclepoll call center using person to person live operators from September 22nd to September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

Initial calls were made between the hours of 6:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. Subsequent call-backs of no-answers and busy numbers were made on a (staggered) daily rotating basis up to 5 times (from 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.) until contact was made. In addition, telephone interview appointments were attempted with those respondents unable to complete the survey at the time of contact. If no contact was made at a number after the fifth attempt, the number was discarded and a new one supplanted it.

## Confidence

The margin of error for the total N=1000 sample is  $\pm 3.1\%$  at the 95% confidence interval. Error rates for sub-groups of the population (demographics) vary and are higher.

# Top of Mind Issue

In the first question presented to all N=1000 respondents , they were asked in an open-ended or unaided probe to name what they considered to be the main issue facing the City of Barrie.

*Q1. What in your opinion is the main issue facing the City of Barrie at this time?*

Cost of living	21%
Encampments / homeless	19%
Community safety / policing / crime	18%
Housing	9%
Addictions / drugs / opioids	8%
Poverty	6%
Infrastructure / roads	4%
Health care	4%
Economy, jobs, economic issues	4%
Unsure	3%
Transportation / transit / gridlock	3%
Environment	1%
Mental health	1%

Cost of living is the leading concern, cited by 21% of respondents. Encampments / homelessness follow closely at 19%, with community safety and crime at 18%. Encampments were most named by those in Wards 2 (34%), 7 (35%) and 8 (35%). Safety was also most recalled by those in Wards 2 (24%) and 8 (26%).

Other notable issues include housing (9%), addictions and drug use (8%) as well as poverty (6%). Secondary issues were infrastructure, health care, and economic concerns that each received 4%.

Transportation, the environment, and mental health were less prominent, each under 3%.

Overall, the results highlight a strong focus on affordability, homelessness, and public safety as the most pressing challenges for Barrie residents.

# Perception of Safety

In the second probe, respondents were asked to rate their level of safety in their neighbourhoods and local parks. A 10-point scale was used, and the total unsafe and safe scores are highlighted below.

*Q2. On a scale of 1-10, with one being very unsafe and 10 being very safe, how safe do you feel in your neighbourhood and when using community parks?*

1 Very unsafe	9%	}	27%
2 Unsafe	11%		
3	3%		
4	4%		
5 Neither unsafe nor safe	4%		
6	3%	}	61%
7	6%		
8	9%		
9 Safe	33%		
10 Very safe	13%		
Unsure	5%		

Slightly more than six in ten or 61% provided a rating from 7-10, claiming they feel safe, while 27% said that they feel unsafe (1-4). Seven percent provided a neutral rating (5-6) and 5% were unsure. Unsafe numbers were highest in Wards 2 (40%) and 8 (48%).

# Tolerance for Higher Taxes

The following short descriptive statement was first read to all respondents after which they were asked if they would be willing to pay higher taxes to maintain service levels for City services and Service Partners.

*“While the City of Barrie provides many services for its residents and businesses, it also faces high inflation costs while delivering these services. In order to maintain existing service levels, would you be willing to pay slightly higher taxes for each of the following?”*

## Q3A. City Services



## Q3B. Service Partners (County, Police, Library)



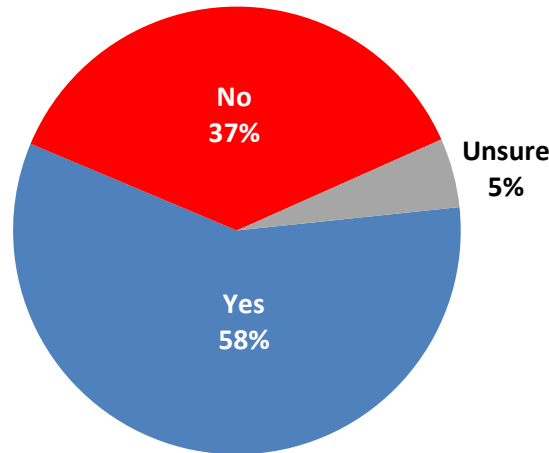
Slightly more than four in ten or 42% are willing to pay more for City services with results being strongest among those aged 40-49 (54%) and 30-39 (52%) and among the highest earners in the 100,000+ per annum category (71%) and \$70,000 - \$79,999 bracket (63%). More males (44%) compared to females (40%) said yes.

51% would tolerate an increase for service partners such as the police. Results of yes were strongest among those living in Wards 2 (60%) and 8 (66%), the highest earners (\$100,000+, 86%) and mid-aged residents 30-39 (60%) and 40-49 (60%).

# Taxation vs Services Received

All N=1000 residents were then asked if the taxes they pay to the city were fair in relation to the services received. A small majority answered yes to the question.

*Q4. In your opinion, are the taxes you pay to the City of Barrie fair in relation to the services you receive?*



Fifty-eight percent of respondents are of the opinion that the taxes they pay are fair in relation to the services they receive.

# Greater Funding for Services & Areas

In the final question, respondents were asked in an open-ended or unaided probe to identify what local services or areas should receive greater funding from the municipal taxes paid.

*Q5. What local services or areas do you feel should receive greater funding from the municipal taxes you pay?*

Police services	30%
Infrastructure / roads / sidewalks	16%
Housing (affordable)	11%
Transit services	7%
Unsure	7%
Garbage / waste / recycling services	6%
Fire department	5%
Water / sewers	3%
Snow removal / winter road sidewalk maintenance	3%
Social services / outreach / support for drug addicted. homeless	3%
Outdoor rec facilities / services / programs	2%
Ambulance / paramedics	1%
Youth programs (after school, daycare, teen)	1%
Indoor rec facilities / services / programs	1%
Seniors/55+ programs	1%
Street lighting	1%
Health Unit	1%
Libraries	<1%
By law department	<1%

Police services received the highest support at 30%, indicating strong public demand for enhanced law enforcement. Infrastructure (roads, sidewalks) followed at 16%, reflecting concern for physical upkeep and mobility. Affordable housing came third at 11%, highlighting growing attention to housing challenges.

There was moderate support for transit services and garbage/waste/recycling, each garnering 6–7%, while the fire department received 5%. Water/sewers, snow removal, and social services each had 3%.