

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**2015 Business Plan & Budget Focuses on Fixing Infrastructure**

(Barrie, ON) Following a series of cuts to the City's proposed capital and operating budget, City Council has approved a 3.19% tax increase for residents, which translates into an additional \$116 to the typical Barrie home assessed at \$282,000.

Council faced tough decisions to reduce the tax rate, while increasing investment to Barrie's aging infrastructure and maintaining the over 60 services the City provides such as water, garbage & recycling collection, roads, snow removal, traffic signals, street lights, libraries, parks, police and fire, among many others. This year's tax increase breaks down to 2.19% for city services and 1% to fund key infrastructure projects through a new Dedicated Infrastructure Renewal Fund that will be used only for the maintenance and rehabilitation of Barrie's roads, bridges, storm water drains, sewers, sidewalks, water treatment facilities and other infrastructure. This fund will allow the City to do critically important work sooner, and move towards a "pay as you go" system.

"We are finally tackling Barrie's infrastructure deficit in a meaningful way," says Mayor Jeff Lehman. "The Dedicated Infrastructure Renewal Fund will allow us to fix more roads, pipes and buildings, while significantly reducing our debt and saving residents millions of dollars."

The City's capital budget for this year, which is worth \$65 million, focuses on City infrastructure and addressing growth pressures. Major projects include: converting the City's streetlights to LED, which is forecast to reduce energy use by 67% and maintenance costs by 80%; permanent traffic calming measures on Cumming Drive, Cook Street and Sandringham Drive; reconstruction of Highway 400/Tiffin Street bridge; reconstruction and widening of Mapleview Drive East between Huronia and Country Lane; reconstruction and widening of Essa Road between Ferndale and Coughlin; completion of the Lakeshore Drive realignment project; replacing aging transit buses; and redeveloping Memorial Square.

The 2015 Business Plan & Budget includes funding for 16 new paramedics, 54 new housing units at the Brooks Street Seniors Home and additional staff for the City's Operations Department for road maintenance, playground maintenance, and maintaining the City's storm water facilities, to improve the health of Lake Simcoe.

Improvements to the City's waste management program are also part of this year's Budget, including a plan to address diaper disposal during the summer period May 1-October 31. Multi - residential garbage collection will be reviewed by staff and a report will be brought back for Council's consideration later this year. An organics diversion pilot program for multi-residential units was also approved.

Proposed changes to the City's parking rates were referred to the Infrastructure, Investment and Development Services Committee for further consideration and review. The Committee will report back to Council with their recommendations later in 2015.

Of the residential property tax bill, 51% funds City services, 15% funds education, as mandated by the Province, and 34% funds the City's service partners such as the Barrie Police, Public Library and services delivered by the County of Simcoe such as Land Ambulance and Social Services. The Business Plan & Budget will be financed by a combination of property taxes, user fees and other financing sources.

The 2015 Business Plan & Budget is available at [barrie.ca/budget](http://barrie.ca/budget).

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