

## **COUNCIL REPORT**

**To:** Mayor and Council

**From:** Corporate Services

**Date:** February 18, 2025

**Subject:** 2025 Budget Survey – What We Heard

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### **RECOMMENDATION:**

THAT Council receives this report for information.

### **BACKGROUND:**

Following the Budget Open House held on February 5, 2025, the District opened a survey from February 6 – 18, 2025 to gather feedback on the presented shortfall funding scenarios and options. 309 responses were received. A summary of the results has been attached to this report.

There were over 250 comments and questions resulting from the survey, as such they were not included in the summary in full detail. However, there were several themes among the comments which are discussed below.

A full copy of the survey results, list of comments, and questions are available in the Centre Table File for Council's review.

This report will be made available for public review on Let's Chat Mackenzie and in paper format at the Municipal Office. A copy may also be requested by email to [info@districtofmackenzie.ca](mailto:info@districtofmackenzie.ca).

### **Comments and Questions Summary**

It was clear that the respondents value the level of service currently provided and there was a division in which service areas they would accept reductions, if necessary. It was also noted throughout that respondents felt there could be District operational efficiencies made before the need to increase taxes or use reserves to fund the shortfall. The following list summarizes the suggested efficiency and cost savings measures, in no rank order:

- Prioritize and focus on the essentials in developing department workplans, training, and capital purchase/project requests.
- Delay unneeded projects and equipment purchases to future years where possible.

- Consider selling vehicles and other no longer usable assets to gain revenue.
- Consider reducing staffing at all levels across departments and/or look at creative work-share arrangements, seasonal positions, or shifting work hours to reduce overtime.
- Change snow removal policies to reduce the number of call outs and overtime.
- Change to a bi-weekly garbage service.
- Change parks/green space maintenance to reduce the amount of mowing and other maintenance (ie. rock gardens or plant wildflowers in some areas of town instead).
- Increase user fees at the Recreation Centre and elsewhere.
- Consider closing the pool during the summer months.
- Reduce airport services, including snow removal and the terminal/fuel service contract.
- Reduce visitor services at the Caboose.
- Stop purchasing flowers/hanging baskets.
- Close Little Mac Ski Hill.
- Delay demolition of the EBCC and any other buildings to a future year.
- Look for volunteers to provide select programs and services.
- Reduce the community grants program.
- Apply for Provincial relief or other grants where possible to help with the current shortfall and support future service delivery and projects.

Further themes repeated in the comments:

- There was concern expressed about the long-term use and availability of reserves.
- There was concern about the proposed reduction in recreation services and events as respondents felt not having these services would detract from resident quality of life, health, as well as any resident or investment attraction efforts.
- The District should be looking at more ways to support current business and attract new investment to Mackenzie, as well as encourage diversification into other industries such as tourism, data/tech, remote work, etc.
- The District should focus on current service sustainability prior to offering new services.

Lastly, the survey provided an opportunity for respondents to ask questions about the 2025 Budget. Staff have included answers to as many questions as they could and attached them to this report. Please note that there were some repeat/similar questions that were answered in one.



## **COUNCIL PRIORITIES:**

### **Strong Governance and Finances**

As the municipality's elected governing body, we serve all residents and businesses in the community. We engage residents and stakeholders on important issues and make our decisions through open and transparent processes. We are careful in our use of resources, mindful of the need to maintain programs and services, while also meeting the community's infrastructure needs.

## **RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:**

Emily Kaehn, Director of Corporate Services

**Reviewed By:** Corporate and Financial Services

**Approved By:** Chief Administrative Officer