



Community Report

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> THE FINANCIAL EDITION

westvancouver

Dear West Vancouver Resident:

The 2014 Budget for the District of West Vancouver represents a departure from recent years and mirrors a changing fiscal reality for the District of West Vancouver and its residents.

After no increases to the effective property tax rate for three of the past four years, the budget was approved by Council on March 10, 2014 and provides for a 2.92 per cent increase to effective property tax rates.

The budget is a plan for how the District of West Vancouver will operate and deliver the programs and services expected and valued by District residents, including those which we are legally required to provide under the Community Charter and Local Government Act of British Columbia.

The budget process is guided by Council's five priorities and the Community Strategic Plan. Council's five priorities are the Public Safety Building, Ambleside Activation, Housing and Neighbourhood Character, Municipal Services and Finances, and Environment, Parks and Upper Lands. These priorities will guide staff's work plans for 2014. As well, we are working on financial modeling to help us focus on where we want to be 10-15 years from now, and to help us navigate the path forward.

This budget is also an exercise in making difficult decisions on how to allocate scarce resources most efficiently. Furthermore, the budget sends a signal that the District and residents may need to temper their expectations of what the District can provide with the resources we have to work with. The challenges of dealing with our fiscal position are further explored inside this publication.

Fresh data on property tax preferences

- In 2013, our statistically valid community survey indicated that over 90 per cent of respondents are very or somewhat satisfied with municipal services and would like them to remain at their current levels.
- The survey also indicated that 40 per cent of respondents would prefer a tax increase to maintain service levels, while another 25 per cent would support an increase if it translated into increased services and/or infrastructure renewal.
- Twenty-two per cent preferred to maintain taxes even if it means cuts to services.
- Six per cent supported reducing taxes and services.

The impact on residents

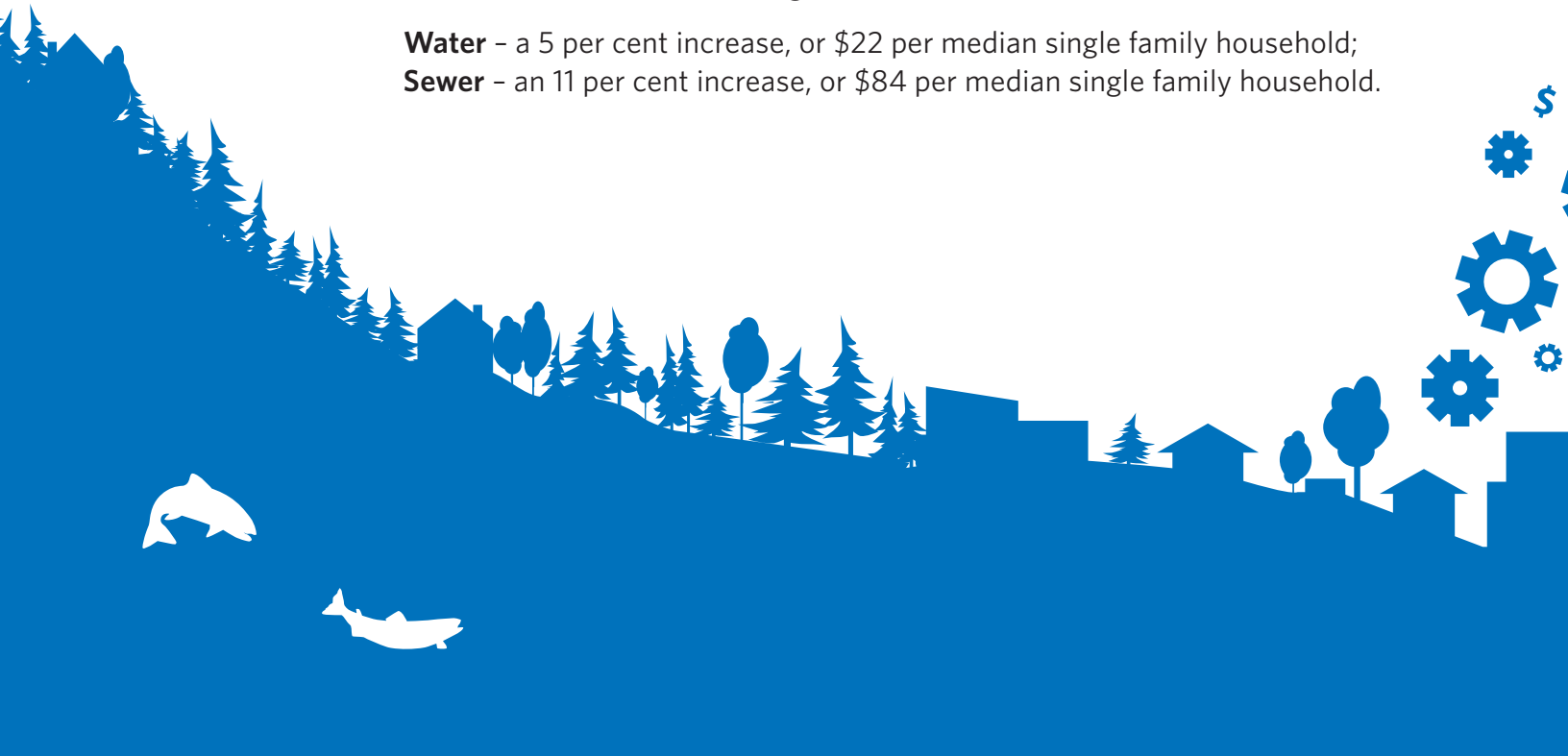
The average assessed value of a residential property in the District of West Vancouver in 2014 was \$1,861,613. Based on that figure, a 2.92 per cent property tax increase means the average household would pay \$93.63 more in residential property taxes in 2014. The decisions about the District's service delivery and addressing aging infrastructure for the future are challenging, but the current property tax increase means, in the short term, protecting and continuing to offer many of the services you've told us are important to you.

Water and sewer utilities costs increasing

In 2014, utility rates were presented together with the budget. Within water and sewer utilities, projected costs of future infrastructure replacements have been integrated into long-term operating and funding models for a number of years. The proposed rate increases for water and sewer are in line with these long-term models. Details are as follows:

Water - a 5 per cent increase, or \$22 per median single family household;

Sewer - an 11 per cent increase, or \$84 per median single family household.



The road ahead for 2014

Difficult choices for our community

We are committed to exploring new and diversified revenue sources—something we already do across the District—to continue providing quality programs and services. This is because, whether we're speaking of seniors' programs or upgrades to parks or any District program or service, the reality is that, in the long term, the current level of resources will not be sufficient for the District to sustain current service levels or maintain or improve aging equipment facilities and infrastructure.

Our executive team and managers are experienced professionals who know how to manage resources, plan projects and deliver programs and services. Each executive team member calculates and submits requests for capital and operating funding that allows him or her to complete their workplans.

Due to relatively flat revenues and increased operating costs required to deliver the same level of programs and services, difficult decisions needed to be made to ensure the priorities of Council and community were achieved. In order to accommodate a reasonable tax rate increase this year a number of capital projects needed to be deferred to 2015 and beyond, or cut completely. See below for a partial list.

SOME PROJECTS DEFERRED OR CUT IN 2014

- \$330,000 *Facilities maintenance*
- \$227,000 *Information systems upgrades*
- \$19,000 *Emergency call centre*
- \$50,000 *Environmental protection enhancement*
- \$20,000 *Public art repairs*
- \$191,000 *Marine Drive improvements for bicycles*
- \$135,000 *Fleet vehicles*
- \$350,000 *Upgrades to railway crossing in Ambleside*
- \$350,000 *Replacement of fire truck*
- \$60,000 *Library south wing renovation*
- \$300,000 *Sports field drainage & irrigation improvements*
- \$10,000 *Community centre outdoor furniture*

See westvancouver.ca/budget for a full list.

Beyond 2014

Prudent planning required

One thing is certain: costs are not going to go down for the District. Programs, services, facilities and infrastructure renewal—creating a plan and financial mechanism to fund necessary upgrades to the District's aging facilities—is a priority. We will continue to explore and identify alternative diversified revenue sources, look for greater efficiencies and fine-tune our budgeting and planning processes strategically. We will also consult with District residents carefully on how to address these fiscal challenges with a long-term view to fiscal sustainability. ▪




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As the critical fiscal issues we've outlined here come forward, we'll be asking you for your ideas, thoughts and concerns. We love paper documents like this one, but we love online communication even more for all the trees it saves! Sign up at **westvancouverITE.ca** and you'll receive emails notifying you of opportunities to learn about and comment on fiscal and other issues facing West Vancouver, now and into the future.

MyDistrict *Manage your accounts*

Go online to create a personal account and keep your tax, utility, dog and business licence accounts all in one place. View your current and past bills. See your account payment history and keep track of your water conservation efforts. Sign up at **westvancouver.ca/mydistrict**.

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