



Saint John Mayor Don Darling says the city's future depends on this term of council passing on the baton of financial discipline.

Photo: Barbara Simpson/Telegraph-Journal

Saint John eyes two-year \$42M capital budget

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Barbara Simpson | Telegraph-Journal

SAINT JOHN • As it digs itself out of a financial crisis, the City of Saint John has unveiled its first two-year general capital budget – a \$42-million spending plan focused on strategic reinvestment to support growth.

City staff presented the first draft of the multi-year budget at Wednesday's finance committee meeting. The proposed spending plan would cover the years 2020-21, meaning a capital budget would already be in place for the next term of city council.

Saint John Mayor Don Darling said financial discipline will be critical for the city's future when council "passes the baton" onto the next group of elected officials.

"The legacy that this council and future councils can leave is disciplined long-term plans," he said.

The \$42-million budget proposes infrastructure projects to address climate change, support tax base growth and tackle the city's \$435-million list of assets in need of replacement.

Among the most sizable projects are an \$8.1-million rebuild of the Fundy Quay seawall and \$8.9 million worth of sewer separation projects, resulting in complete reconstructions of several streets.

Saint John Water has also earmarked \$7.8 million for those sewer separation projects in its proposed 2020-21 capital budget. It presented its own \$26-million spending plan at Wednesday's committee meeting.

While the City of Saint John will need to borrow \$12 million to help fund its general capital budget, Saint John Water doesn't plan to borrow any more for infrastructure projects.

It will cover \$10 million of its infrastructure projects through its operating budget.

“We’re not borrowing any more for the utility and that’s intentional to ensure we remain focused on paying down the debt that’s been accumulated as a result of the harbour clean-up initiative and the Safe, Clean Drinking Water Project,” said Brent McGovern, commissioner of Saint John Water.

City staff are proposing just \$1 million of the \$42-million budget be spent on new capital projects. More than half of that would be for the city’s final year investment into the Greater Saint John Field House.

Other regional facilities, like Harbour Station and the Canada Games Aquatic Centre, are due for \$1.6 million worth of upgrades. Some of Harbour Station’s upgrades are to meet Quebec Major Junior Hockey League requirements, according to city staff.

Coun. David Merrithew said the new two-year capital budget process will align with a 10-year capital investment plan in the works for the city.

“Any business doesn’t plan year by year. Neither should we,” said Merrithew, who is also finance committee chairman.

“We need a vision for what we’re going to replace, where we put our monies – there’s only so much – and now we can look at that vision over a longer period of time.”

PROPOSED CAPITAL PROJECTS:

\$8.9M worth of sewer separation projects, resulting in complete street reconstructions

\$8.1M to rebuild the Fundy Quay seawall

\$7.9M to rehabilitate Saint John streets, sidewalks and curbs

\$1M to expand Millidgeville’s stormwater capacity for more development

\$700K of Harbour Station upgrades, including a new dasher boards and a new Zamboni to meet Quebec Major Junior Hockey League requirements

\$700K for Canada Games Aquatic Centre upgrades, including window replacement and exterior work

\$200K to replace roofs of three fire stations

(Source: City of Saint John report)

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Bonita_Russell_ 4 hours ago

the article starts with "as it digs itself out of a financial crisis".....what Actions is Saint John council taking to dig itself out of the financial crisis....these are not apparent. Mayor announced 2 years ago that "We're Broke" in the Telegraph Journal but debt and deficits have continued to rise.

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Raymond_Bungay_ 10 hours ago

How much of that \$8.1M for Fundy Quay could be or should be recovered from the developer hired to rehabilitate that area along the water front? Or is the plan to either see it stay as waste land or "give it away" to see something built there?

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