



Comox News

May 2011

The Town of Comox Community Newsletter

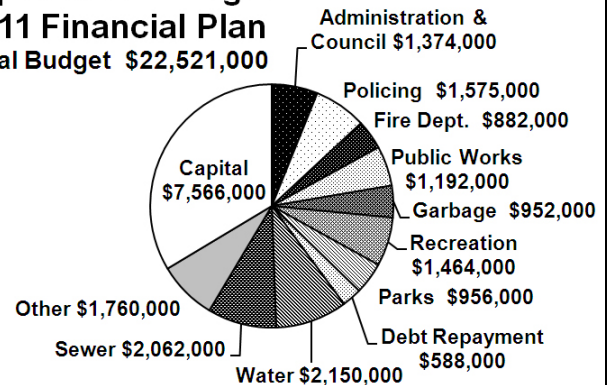
Council adopts 2011-2015 Financial Plan

Council has adopted a new five-year Financial Plan, founded on its three strategic priorities: sustainable infrastructure, sustainability and livability, and good governance.

The largest portion of our expenditures are capital (1/3 of our total budget again this year) and this year includes finishing our rec. centre expansion and a geo-thermal energy system there, building bike lanes on a portion of Comox Avenue, overlaying the pavement on Guthrie Road from Aspen to McDonald, replacing a 21 year old fire truck and a 17 year old dump truck, and acquiring park land adjacent to Mack Laing Park.

To pay for this we are budgeting for capital grants

Expenditure Budget 2011 Financial Plan Total Budget \$22,521,000



from the Federal and Provincial Governments, use of our capital reserves and of course taxation. Overall general property taxes will increase this year by 2.26% (this will vary property by property depending on assessment changes). Businesses will have an overall increase of only 1.26% in our general taxes.

There are no changes this year to our general water & sewer parcel taxes (\$30 and \$60 respectively) or to our user fees for water, sewer and garbage (\$714 per single-family and \$678 per multi-family unit).

For more information on our Financial Plan visit our website: comox.ca

New electronic Home Owners Grant (eHOG) for Comox!

You may be one of the many owners whose mortgage company pays their property taxes but still come to Town Hall in person to give us your Home Owner Grant claim.

Starting now, you can submit your Home Owner Grant application on-line!

Your Property Tax Notice includes an 8 character eHOG password printed under your return address if you are eligible.

To make your grant claim on-line, go to this page of our website:

<http://comox.ca/ehog/>

Click on the link there to go to our service provider's eHOG website.

Enter your roll number and then your eHOG password from your tax notice. Capitalize it as printed on the tax notice. If you are having trouble, double check your CAPS LOCK.

Once you are logged in, you can complete your application by responding to the usual questions.

We **strongly** recommend that you print your grant claim once submitted. Please note that if Town Hall requires additional documentation, this will be noted on that screen and it must be received at Town Hall by July 4th (the tax payment deadline) to avoid the 10% penalty.

On the cover:

- Council adopts 2011-2015 Financial Plan
- Electronic Home Owner Grants

On the back:

- July 4th Deadline, Penalties and Prepayments
- Provincial Tax Deferment Programs
- Northern and Rural (N&R) Home Owner Grant
- Residential Water Metering Update

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We're on the Web!

Find us at:

[http://comox.ca/](http://comox.ca)

July 4th deadline and penalties plus prepayments

Every year some owners are charged a 10% penalty because they fail to complete their Home Owner Grant claim on time. **Please don't let this happen to you!**

Failing to complete your claim by July 4th is the same as not paying your taxes on time, and it incurs a mandatory 10% penalty on the late or incomplete claim.

So don't wait! Send us your Grant application or make an on-line eHOG claim today.

We welcome cheques post-dated for July 4th if you don't actually want to pay the tax balance until then.

If you pay your taxes at a financial institution make sure that they will forward your claim (on the back of the payment stub) to us at

Town Hall, in order to avoid the penalty.

PREPAYMENT PLAN: Did you know that we have a prepayment plan to pay next year's property taxes in ten automatic monthly installments? Or that we pay you interest on your prepayments? See us at Town Hall for details on our program or to get enrollment forms.

Provincial Property Tax Deferral Programs

The Province has two programs for deferring this year's property taxes: the Regular Tax Deferral Program, and the Families with Children Program.

The Regular Program is available for owners who are 55 or more years old this year or are a surviving spouse or a person with a

disability as defined by the Province's regulation, and if they have at least 25% equity in their home.

The Families with Children Deferral Program is for owners supporting a dependent child who is under 18 years old and if they have at least 15% equity in their home.

More details are available at Town Hall or on the Province's website:

www.gov.bc.ca

We ask anyone who wants to apply for deferral to please visit us well before the tax deadline of July 4th in order to avoid lineups and to give them time to complete the forms.

Northern and Rural (N&R) Home Owner Grant

Most home owners are eligible for a Provincial Home Owner Grant. This year the Province has added a \$200 Northern and Rural Home Owner grant on top of the long standing grants (which had been \$570 regular and \$845 additional). As a result, net property taxes for most Comox homes will go down this year from their 2010 balances.

Residential Water Metering Update

One-quarter of the single-family homes in Comox now have water meters. We will write to these owners to provide them with their meter number so they can look up their meter readings on the table we will post to our website monthly. Homes with large water use will also be notified of this and asked to check for water leaks at their home and fix them.

We hope that late in 2011 or early 2012 we will be able to offer owners a choice to pay only for the water they use starting in 2012. But this year we will continue to charge \$303 per residential unit on our tax notice. To those who volunteered for meters, we thank you for your patience as we develop this new program.

And this year, in addition to single-family homes, we will install meters on our larger multi-family developments. We expect that multi-family customers use much less water (on average per unit) than single-family homes, and that they may have an opportunity to save money if they were paying only for the water they use.

This newsletter is a result of Council's initiative to increase communication with residents. If you have any comments or suggestions, or would like to see anything in particular in upcoming editions, please contact us.