



Municipal Council went on a retreat earlier this year to discuss our vision and set down the priorities for our term. The environment and the fight against climate change emerged as the most important issues for Council. These are priorities that we kept in mind when it came time to work on the 2023 budget.

After several meetings and discussion, we decided to increase the tax rate by 3.4%. This increase can be explained by rising costs due to inflation and the investments needed to maintain the level of service to the population as well as to maintain our existing infrastructure. It will also allow us to hire the staff needed for priority projects.

A budget in line with our values

Despite its small size, Chelsea has proven to be a leader in the fight against climate change. We became the first municipality in the Outaouais to adopt a Sustainable Development Action Plan and one of the first to adopt a Climate Change Adaptation Plan. Our new Urban Plan also sets the bar much higher than the majority of cities and municipalities in Quebec when it comes to environmental protection.

The 2023 budget is no exception and includes several items for larger ongoing projects, as well as some new initiatives.

These include:

- The renewal of the Sustainable Development Action Plan
- The development of an action plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions on the territory
- The development and adoption of a conservation plan for natural environments
- A characterization study of the heat islands on the territory
- The treatment of contaminated soils and the hydroseeding of our ditches

We will also begin discussions with the community as early as 2023 to establish a shared vision for Farm Point. This process will lead to the development and adoption of a Specific Planning Program (SPP) for the area. The SPP could, for example, regulate land use, density, activities, and environmental protection to help make sure the sector is developed in a balanced way.

Investing in our community

When we invest in our sports, cultural, and community infrastructure and activities, we're investing in our social fabric. We're giving ourselves the chance to grow as individuals and as a community—to meet, share, and support each other. That's why we have reconducted several major activities in the budget again this year. These include Chelsea en fête, the Grande marche, and Noël magique.

We'll also be entering the second year of our partnership with La Fab sur Mill. This is a project that's particularly dear to my heart, since it allows us to offer enriching cultural programming while preserving a heritage building in the community.

Chelsea's operating budget also covers a number of other great projects and investments to:

- Finalize our cultural policy
- Update the active transportation map
- Hold public consultations on the idea of a teen park, an outdoor cultural venue, the Voie Verte Chelsea interpretive site, and parks in Hollow Glen
- Build more trails
- Build a basketball court in Sector 1
- Purchase two courtesy bikes (conditional on grant funding)

Service to residents a key consideration

Municipal Council approved the creation of six new positions to support the existing team at town hall and improve service to residents. This will add a new resource to most departments. Despite the labour shortage, we hope to be able to fill these positions quickly in order to give the municipal team a boost and optimize our services.

A new position in the permits team has been created to focus entirely on analyzing permit applications and following up with residents. This should speed up the process and reduce the time it takes to issue permits. The public works team will also be expanded to improve operational efficiency and do more drainage and maintenance work.

We'll also be rolling out a new communication tool in 2023 to allow us to notify you more easily in the case of emergencies. It will be used to call residents or send them a text message when there is a boil water advisory or a major storm like the derecho last May, for example. Since registration will be on a voluntary basis, I strongly encourage you to register when the platform is launched.

Conclusion

As in every budgeting process, we had to make choices to arrive at a balanced budget that respects our vision and our ability to pay. It would obviously be impossible to achieve everything in one year, so we prioritize. To help with that, the Municipality will adopt a strategic plan in 2023. The plan will allow us to better anticipate our needs and will set the course for our decisions.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the municipal team for meeting with us on several occasions to present their budgets and discuss the vision for each department. Thank you also to our councillors for their availability and hard work. Many hours went into the making of this budget, with much thought and discussion and careful consideration on all sides. I hope it will meet your needs and expectations.

Happy holidays!

Pierre Guénard, mayor

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'P. Guénard', written in a cursive style.