



Dear residents,

I am pleased to present the fourth and final operating budget of this Council. The budget was prepared under very different conditions this year. Despite the challenges and uncertainties created by COVID-19, Council and Municipal staff have managed to construct a realistic budget of \$21.3 million focused on sound financial management, the environment, and active transportation.

I am very pleased to announce that for 2021, there will be no increase in the property tax rate. The MRC's new three-year assessment roll for 2021-2022-2023 showed an average increase in taxable assessments of 6% across all categories. For this reason, Council voted in favour of a 6% decrease in the property tax rate for both residential and non-residential properties. In addition, the increase in revenues generated by new developments allows us to adopt this reduced rate; for an average residence this will represent a property tax freeze of the 2021 annual account.

The tax rates for 2021 will therefore be:

- \$0.7457 per \$100 for residential and farm assessments
- \$1.0536 per \$100 for non-residential and industrial assessments

Sound financial management

For Council, the increase in our revenues reinforces the importance of sound financial management in order to ensure smart investments, limit new spending and ensure faster repayment of existing

debt, while maintaining the flexibility to resolve any exceptional situations that may arise. A [policy on the management of long-term debt and accumulated surpluses](#) was adopted this year. It establishes specific ratios in addition to setting targets and minimum or maximum acceptable levels.

Two ratios are established for the management of the long-term debt:

1. The debt-servicing ratio assumed by all taxpayers
2. The ratio of debt assumed by all taxpayers based on standardized property value.

A ratio is also established for the management of accumulated surpluses as well as criteria for the use of additional surpluses:

1. The ratio of unrestricted operating surplus to annual budget.

Throughout the budget process, particular attention was paid to complying with this policy. Council ensured that it respected the established ratios and carried out its investment projects while limiting the increase in long-term debt. Drainage work (\$150,000), the purchase of various pieces of equipment (\$96,250) and vehicles (\$75,000) will be paid from the operating budget, while other vehicles (\$450,000) and major building maintenance expenses (\$216,875) will be paid from the unrestricted surplus.

In total, almost \$1 million will not be added to the debt.

In addition, upon filing of the audited 2020 Annual Financial Report, if possible, an additional amount will be placed in a surplus earmarked for the repayment of long-term debt.

Finally, a study on road degradation was included in the budget in order to better plan the work required to repair and maintain the roads. An amount has also been included to carry out certain analyses to better anticipate future needs in the center village. Although new developments generate significant revenues, they also create needs in terms of services and infrastructure. This analysis will therefore allow us to plan them better.



Investments in the environment and active transportation

Many excellent projects were included in this year's budget related to the environment and active transportation. Again this year these items are priorities for Municipal Council.

Fonds vert municipal

Municipal Council has decided to establish a Fonds vert municipal that will allow the Municipality, as well as organizations and residents, to obtain financial leverage and municipal support for environmental, sustainable development or active transportation initiatives. Eligible projects must be based on the orientations of the Sustainable Development Action Plan (SDAP) and/or the Municipality's Active Transportation Master Plan.

Sustainable Development Action Plan (SDAP)

We will also begin to plan for the renewal of the SDAP for the years 2022-2025. An update on the projects completed since its adoption in 2018 will also be published shortly. You will therefore be able to see the actions that have been undertaken in recent years and together we will be able to begin to target future priorities in this area.

Community Trail and Access to the Gatineau River

Early next year, the Municipality will continue its work to finalize the community trail. Although it is almost completed, there is still work to be done including the completion of the signage. A communication plan will also be developed to inform you of the code of conduct to be followed during your outings, so as to respect riverside residents and other users. In addition, guardrails and barriers have been included in the Three-Year Investment Plan and will be added in the coming year.

The 2021 budget also includes the renewal of the Cocoriko licence, in particular to hold a public consultation on access to the Gatineau River early in the New Year. Its purpose will be to identify potential sites for a rest stop or picnic area, a point for water access and a boat launch in Farm Point.

Creation of active transportation trails in the Centre Village

The operating budget provides for the construction of two new trails in the center village. The first will encourage walking and cycling by providing an alternative to Chemin d'Old Chelsea with a trail that would run from Chemin Padden to Highway 5. This trail is a partnership between the Municipality, the MRC des Collines-de-l'Outaouais, our local businesses and Sentiers Chelsea Trails. We are still in the early stages of the project, but the trail is expected to be completed in 2021.

The second trail whose construction will also begin in 2021, will link the Hendrick Farm neighborhood to Chemin de la Mine. It is also a project carried out in partnership with Sentier Chelsea Trails.

In its Triennial Capital Expenses Plan Council also adopted an amount to begin the development of plans and specifications for a trail linking the Chelsea Creek neighbourhood to Technology Boulevard in Gatineau. This trail will allow many residents to use an active mode of transportation to get to employment centres.

These new trails are the result of the public consultation on the renewal of the Active Transportation Plan. Many of you requested connections to nearby cities (94%) and businesses (92%). I am very pleased to announce that actions in this regard will be taken in the coming year.

Projects for youth and teens

A project is expected to begin in Ward 1 for the construction of a structure that will allow the youth of the neighbourhood to exercise. Given the lack of infrastructure in the neighbourhood, certain possibilities will be evaluated to address this situation.

An amount has also been set aside for the development of a gathering place for teenagers. Details has yet to be decided. I therefore invite teens to contact their municipal councillor to share with us what they would like to see!

Master Plan Revision

The next phase of the Master Plan revision will include public consultations and virtual workshops with community groups and stakeholders. The



purpose of these consultations will be to establish the main directions and objectives that will guide land use planning in Chelsea for the coming years. We plan to hold these consultations in early 2021.

The next step that will follow in the spring will be the revision of the planning by-laws. This will give you the opportunity to express yourself on even more specific points, such as the shape of buildings, measures to protect natural environments or the service offer in terms of businesses. Once again, your participation is essential since it will be the voice of future decisions in the coming years.

NCC Dispute

Council continues to work hard to recover the \$1.4 million the National Capital Commission (NCC) owes us for payments in lieu of taxes for the 2018, 2019 and 2020 fiscal years. This amount is significant for our municipality as it alone represents \$166 on the tax bill of an average residence, without including legal fees.

The hearing before the Payments in Lieu of Taxes Dispute Advisory Panel took place in late November. We are now awaiting the panel's conclusion. However, it could still take a few months.

We are challenging the NCC's refusal to pay the amounts owed to us as a result of the assessed value of their properties in Gatineau Park for the past two years. To help us pay our legal costs, the Union des municipalités du Québec (UMQ) recently announced that it will provide us with financial support of up to \$10,000. It is excellent news to know that we have their support. We also hope that our case can serve as a precedent for other municipalities that are experiencing or could experience a similar dispute.

Adoption of policy for managers

The municipal council and the Municipality's executives agreed this month on their working conditions until 2022. I would like to thank the Human Resources Committee for its work on this issue. We are very pleased since it is important for us to remain competitive in the market and thereby retain our executives. It is thanks to their work that we are able to carry out all our projects.

COVID-19

To help citizens in this exceptional situation, Municipal Council has decided to waive interest and penalties for citizens and merchants on tax coupon payments from March to September. This decision had a slight impact on the year's results, but helped us pull together to help our citizens, merchants and organizations who have been through difficult times.

Financial assistance of \$615,847 was also granted to the Municipality by the Government of Quebec to mitigate the financial effects of the pandemic on municipal finances for 2020 and 2021. The money allowed us to cover the additional expenses and loss of revenue related to the pandemic, but above all, it allowed us to avoid municipal tax increases for citizens and businesses for 2021, in addition to ensuring the protection of the services offered to them. This amount will also be used to support the Meredith Centre Foundation by covering the cost of electricity.

Main projects of the TCEP 2021-2023

The Triennial Capital Expenses Plan (TCEP), adopted last November, includes long-term capital expenditures as opposed to the operating budget, which instead targets expenditures for the current budget year. Once again this year, Council has decided to invest in the projects identified as priorities: development and signage on the Community Trail, rehabilitation and development work on Chemin du Lac-Meech, and rehabilitation work on Chemin De la Rivière. To read my full presentation of the TCEP and see the list of projects, [click here](#).

Conclusion

I would like to thank all the councillors for their dedication over the past three years. It is said that municipal politics is the level of government closest to residents and that is indeed the case. As a Municipal Council, we have given ourselves a mandate to listen to you and work with you on various projects. I would also like to thank all the volunteers who give their own time to work with us and the municipal administration on projects that they hold dear. Thank you also to all the members



of the municipal committees who enable us to make informed decisions when the time comes.

Finally, I would like to thank the staff of the municipal administration for whom the year 2020 has been very special. With all the uncertainty, changes and impacts of COVID-19 on their work, they have kept their focus on the projects and, above all, ensured that the impact on services to residents was minimized as much as possible.

This year, the holiday season will be much different and much less busy as we will have to celebrate it with members of our family bubble only. The vaccine is on its way; this is not the time to ease up. I am asking you to make one last effort, so we stay fit and healthy in 2021. Happy Holidays to all!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Caryl Green".

Caryl Green
Mayor