

Mayor's Message – December 2025

Understanding Our Municipal Budget Process

By Elspeth McLean-Wile

One of the most important responsibilities of Municipal Council is setting strategic priorities for our community and developing both the capital and operating budgets that support those priorities. Many of the projects we undertake are multi-year efforts, and our budgeting process reflects that long-term approach.

A Transparent Budget Process

Over the next several months, Council will work toward approving the municipal budget by March 31, 2026. All budget meetings are open to the public, and residents are encouraged to attend, listen, and share their feedback. Meeting dates and supporting documents, including both capital and operating budget materials, are posted on our website at engage.modl.ca.

Council's first discussions this year focus on capital projects. We maintain a five-year capital plan that includes major initiatives such as wastewater treatment facility upgrades, vehicle replacements, park development, paving of J-class roads, demolition of Centre School, public transit, trail upgrades, sidewalk enhancements, traffic lights and a water tower at Osprey Village. This long-term view helps ensure important infrastructure projects are planned, funded, and completed in a responsible and predictable manner.

Why Debt Matters in Municipal Finance

This year, Council will consider using debt to finance a portion of our capital program. While MODL has proudly remained debt-free since 2021, we now face several large and necessary infrastructure projects that are too significant to be funded within a single year of taxation.

The wastewater treatment plant upgrades at Exit 12 illustrate why debt is sometimes the most responsible tool available. This multi-year project—designed to support growth in Osprey Village—has a total cost of \$24.5 million. The municipality has secured \$16.4 million in grants, and staff are recommending financing the remaining \$8 million through the Municipal Finance Division of the Nova Scotia Department of Finance and Treasury Board, which provides long-term borrowing for municipal infrastructure.

A wastewater treatment plant has a life expectancy of about 20 years. It would not be fair—or financially responsible—to ask today's taxpayers to cover the full cost of a facility that will serve residents for decades to come. Borrowing spreads costs more equitably across all who benefit from the infrastructure over its lifespan. Staff are recommending a 15-year

borrowing term to ensure repayment is complete well before the asset reaches the end of its useful life.

In 2027–2028, Council will consider borrowing for the Exit 12 wastewater treatment plant and in 2028-2029 the Hebbville Pumpstation Replacement. Both projects require long-term financing consistent with their scale and purpose. The short-term financing needed while these projects are under construction will come from reserves.

Just as a family would not purchase a house with their weekly grocery budget, municipalities should not pay for large capital assets entirely out of a single year's tax revenue. Instead, we plan, save, and responsibly borrow—ensuring we can continue to operate effectively delivering programs and services, and still invest in community priorities.

Your Role in the Budget Process

I am confident in the prudent, evidence-based financial advice provided by our staff, and in Council's commitment to ensuring that every dollar is used responsibly. I encourage residents to follow our budget discussions and review the documents available online; you can sign up and receive budget documents as they become available.

As always, please do not hesitate to contact me or any member of Council with your questions or concerns.