

Advertising – Corporate Services

Budget Item: \$9,000

What it is

In May 2024 Council adopted a Public Notice Bylaw that provides for alternative means of public notice, no longer relying on local newspapers. As such, there is no legal requirement for the Township to place any future statutory notices or ads in the newspaper meaning the advertising budget could be reduced or eliminated.

Risks of removing/reducing the amount

This would generally impact communications related to public hearings, amendments to bylaws requiring advance notice, committee recruitment, annual schedules of meetings, and any future assent voting opportunities. By eliminating additional advertising of statutory notices and other Corporate Services communications in the newspaper there is a risk that people who do not use social media or other digital content to stay informed about the activities of the Township will be excluded from communications going forward.

Council has not previously expressed interest in reducing the public's access to information through print media. Additionally, staff sometimes opt to utilize boosted advertising on social media to improve the views on certain local topics to promote it specifically to local community members. A reduction to this budget item would also lessen Esquimalt's information sharing efficacy on social media.

Webcasting Meetings and Agenda Management Software

Budget Item: \$26,000

What it is

Livestreaming Council and Committee meetings is not a statutory requirement for municipalities. Although considered to be a useful accessibility and engagement tool for the public to watch meeting proceedings remotely and for members of Council and staff to review business they were absent for, this is a discretionary service.

Risks of removing it from the budget

Removing this would eliminate public, media, and other interested parties' access to understanding Council decision-making and governance transparency. Previously, Council expressed concerns about reducing opportunities for the public to engage. This would also have administrative implications as the administrative efficiencies gained through the use of the agenda management software would be lost and staff report approvals and agenda production would revert to manual and time-consuming processes. Council would no longer have access to the Insite page for agenda viewing and meeting preparation. Instead, Council would be viewing a standard PDF posted to the website.

Advertising - Engineering

Budget Item: \$4,000

What it is

The total advertising budget for Engineering & Public Works is \$4,000 (excluding capital project specific advertising) and is used for:

- Providing notices in the newspaper for seasonal reminders about keeping leaves clear of catch basins and shoveling snow from sidewalks;
- Advertising in the newspaper for the annual food drive for Esquimalt Neighbourhood House; and
- Mailing letters to residents for changes that may impact them on items that aren't included in project specific budgets (example: letters to notify residents of time limited parking changes in the West Bay area surrounding the Westbay Quay development).

Risks of removing/reducing the amount

This budget is important as it increases resident awareness, in alignment with the Council Priority for an Engaged & Healthy Community.

Removing this budget could result in a decrease in the food donated to Esquimalt Neighbourhood House and residents' awareness of changes in their neighbourhood. Seasonal reminders are helpful, but not as critical as the other uses for this budget.

Professional Services - Engineering

Budget Item: \$10,000

What it is

The total professional services budget for Engineering & Public Works is \$46,250 (excluding capital project specific advertising) and is used for:

- Bi-annual traffic counts at historic locations;
- Bi-annual orthophoto; and
- Unplanned and/or minor consultant services. Recent examples include:
 - Geotechnical services to investigate a settling road and leaning retaining wall;
 - Warrant analysis and stop sign placement for potential conversion from 2-way to 4-way stop controlled intersection at Fairview/Devonshire intersection; and
 - Department strategic review.

Other examples used in the past and/or being considered in 2026 for consultant services include:

- Grant application support;
- Review and update of signal timing to address safety concerns;
- Structural engineering designs for sign bases;
- Structural engineering reviews during a structural failure.

This scenario removes \$10,000 from the total budget, resulting in \$36,250 for the above work. As reflected in the examples used above, this budget is used for potentially urgent and safety related services.

Risks of removing/reducing the amount

There are years where the reduced amount will be sufficient, but there are years where it will limit the work described above. Decreasing this budget would result in less proactive work (examples: stop sign warrant analysis at Fairview/Devonshire and number of locations for traffic counts) and could potentially limit the reactive work that is urgent and safety related. Doing less proactive work could result in improvements being implemented at a slower rate or limited data availability.

Overtime – Community Events

Budget Item: \$5,544

What it is

This represents the additional staffing hours used when the fire department supports public events that are outside its core emergency response duties. These activities are valuable for community engagement, fire prevention education, youth mentorship, and cultural connection, but they occur beyond normal shift coverage. To maintain full emergency readiness while participating in these events, firefighters are scheduled on overtime rather than being reassigned from on-duty crews.

Examples include two annual parades, Wakey Wakey, the Halloween Spooktacular, the Youth Fire Academy, and the Indigenous Fire Boot Camp. These initiatives strengthen public trust, increase safety awareness, and promote interest in emergency services careers.

Risks of removing/reducing the amount

Because these events often require additional personnel or occur during off-duty hours, overtime is the most practical way to staff them without reducing minimum operational coverage. In summary, this overtime reflects a deliberate balance between maintaining emergency service levels and delivering meaningful community programs that benefit the Township.

Firefighter Psychological Support Program

Budget Item: \$19,582

What it is

A proactive mental-health initiative overseen by clinical counsellors through First Responder Health Inc. The program regularly surveys firefighters' psychological health and compares results against industry-specific national norms. It is individualized and confidential, allowing each firefighter's baseline to be established and monitored over time. If a member's results move outside their normal range, the system triggers outreach from a registered counsellor who provides guidance and encourages access to appropriate medical or psychological resources, typically funded through the firefighter's extended health benefits.

Risks of removing/reducing the amount

The program is both measurable and actionable, providing data-informed insights rather than anecdotal observations. Its primary goal is early identification and prevention of mental-health decline before it develops into crisis, medical leave, or long-term health impacts. Given that occupational stress and psychological injury are leading contributors to firefighter absences and reduced performance, this program represents a forward-leaning investment in workforce wellness, resilience, and overall organizational sustainability.

Medical Dispatch Call Adjustments

Budget Item: \$32,000

What it is

“Dispatch Medical Yellow, Orange, and Red Calls” refers to the current service level in which the fire department responds alongside BC Emergency Health Services to virtually all medical incidents where an ambulance is requested. These calls range from lower-acuity injuries, such as fractures, to high-acuity emergencies including cardiac arrest. This model provides strong community value, as fire crews are frequently first on scene and able to deliver immediate first aid, stabilization, and patient support when ambulance response is delayed. Early intervention can prevent conditions from worsening and contributes directly to positive life and health outcomes.

Risks of removing/reducing the amount

A reduction in this service would be noticeable to the community and could increase risk where early care is no longer available. Province-wide ambulance staffing shortages and burnout further highlight the complementary role the fire service provides to the Township. However, if Council chose to limit responses to only “Purple” calls, defined as immediate life-threatening events such as severe trauma or cardiac arrest, overall dispatch volumes would decline, resulting in reduced dispatch service fees that are billed based on call volume.

South Island Prosperity Partnership (SIPP)

Budget Item: \$38,350

What it is

The budget item represents the Township's membership in the South Island Prosperity Partnership, Greater Victoria's regional economic development alliance. SIPP leads regional economic strategy, sector development, investment attraction, data analysis, and collaborative initiatives across municipalities, First Nations, industry, and senior governments.

Why it is important

SIPP provides Esquimalt with access to regional capacity and initiatives that cannot be efficiently delivered locally. This includes participation in sector initiatives such as the Centre for Ocean Applied Sustainable Technologies (COAST) and the Indigenous Prosperity Centre (IPC), which supports Indigenous-led economic development, an Indigenous Business Directory (90+ businesses), workforce studies, youth programs, and procurement initiatives. SIPP also delivers the Rising Economy Conference and Local Leadership Forum, supporting informed decision-making and collaboration on shared challenges such as workforce, housing, and investment attraction. Membership ensures Esquimalt maintains a seat at the regional table and that local priorities are represented in broader economic strategies.

Risks of removing it from the budget

Removing SIPP funding reduces Esquimalt's access to shared regional data, advocacy, funding leverage, and sector initiatives. It weakens the Township's influence in regional economic discussions and shifts responsibility for regional intelligence, partnerships, and strategy back onto internal staff capacity. Over time, this may limit Esquimalt's ability to anticipate economic risks, advance economic reconciliation, and align with regional investment and workforce initiatives.

Local Grants

Budget Item: \$80,000

What it is

The Local Grants Funding Program provides targeted funding to community organizations and initiatives that support Council priorities, including community well-being, cultural vibrancy, environmental stewardship, and good governance. The program operates under an approved policy framework, recently updated through the adoption of revised Local Grant Guidelines and the renumbered ADM-83 Local Grant Policy. The revised program includes clear eligibility criteria, weighted evaluation, and two annual application rounds to improve transparency, accessibility, and accountability.

Why it is important

Local Grants enable community organizations to deliver services, programs, and projects that align with Council priorities without requiring the Township to deliver them directly. The program also supports innovation, partnerships, and environmental sustainability, allowing modest municipal investments to generate broader social, cultural, and environmental outcomes.

Risks of removing it from the budget

Removing Local Grant funding reduces the Township's ability to support community-led initiatives and shifts demand back onto municipal services or unfunded volunteer capacity. Smaller organizations with limited fundraising ability would be disproportionately affected. Over time, this may reduce community programming, weaken local partnerships, and increase pressure on Township staff to address needs previously met through external delivery. The loss would not eliminate demand but would reduce the Township's flexibility and leverage in meeting community priorities.

Place Making – Economic Development

Budget Item: \$10,000

What it is

Placemaking in the economic development context refers to deliberate, small-scale actions that strengthen Esquimalt's identity as a place to live, work, invest, and do business. It focuses on shaping how people experience Esquimalt through physical, digital, and narrative elements, including public spaces, local stories, business visibility, and community activation. Rather than capital-intensive construction, this funding supports flexible, low-cost initiatives that bring the Township's place brand to life.

Why it is important

Placemaking supports Esquimalt's place brand, The Place to Be, by reinforcing a consistent, positive identity across physical spaces and digital platforms. Initiatives supported through this budget include brand-aligned activations, storytelling, and visibility for local businesses through the WhyEsquimalt.ca website. This includes maintaining the business directory, publishing local business news stories, highlighting investment opportunities, and supporting content that showcases Esquimalt's people, neighbourhoods, and economic activity. Together, these efforts help attract customers, visitors, workers, and investors while strengthening community pride and business confidence.

Risks of removing it from the budget

Removing placemaking funding reduces the Township's ability to actively reinforce its place brand and limits flexibility to respond to opportunities that enhance vibrancy and business visibility. The impact is gradual rather than immediate, but over time can weaken brand consistency, reduce local storytelling capacity, and diminish the effectiveness of tools like WhyEsquimalt.ca as active economic development assets rather than static websites.

Advertising - Communications

Budget Item: \$12,900

What it is

The advertising from the Communications department covers a series of broad-based messages that reinforce established priorities and corporate messages.

Example paid ads include: the annual Yukon/BC Legion book; the “Experience Esquimalt” quarterly feature in the Times Colonist that highlights community events and experiences; featured newspaper wraps for Remembrance Day, Truth and Reconciliation, and Pride month; promoting ‘shop local’ and the Place to Be business directory.

It’s important to note that while Communications actively seeks low and no-cost ways of sharing information, some initiatives selected to be highlighted in the traditional advertising space in addition to social media and other tactics. Ads for specific projects come out of the responsible department’s project budget. An exception is the Economic Development function which currently does not have a dedicated advertising budget of its own and relies on this budget when promoting the place brand and any future tourism campaigns.

Why it is important

While only one tool in the toolbox of communications methods, ads provide access to new readers and allow for a variety of formats not always well represented in a social media post. An example is the Experience Esquimalt feature which includes quality photography and a designed list of upcoming events that readers can keep for reference. Another area of focus has been business-targeted ads in publications marketed to industry and business readers.

Risks of removing it from the budget

Reducing this budget would allow staff to maintain some of the previous year’s ads, however eliminating it would risk limiting our audience, underrepresenting council/organizational priorities, reducing storytelling abilities to digital media.

The Current newsletter

Budget Item: \$15,900

What it is

A four-page, full colour newsletter designed and written by township staff that is sent by mail to 10,000 homes and businesses in Esquimalt three times per year. It is also offered digitally. Copies are put in the new resident welcome packages and are available at township facilities.

Why it is important

By design, the Current is meant to be an approachable and engaging piece of communication with content that balances attractive local photography and fun updates with important township dates, initiatives and projects. It's used to share information about service changes, public engagement opportunities, council meetings, emergency information, elections, etc.

Risks of removing it from the budget

This 4-page newsletter is the only hard copy communication that is mailed out across homes and businesses. Those who do not use social media or access the Esquimalt website may miss out on critical municipal updates, opportunities for civic engagement, event notification and more.

The Current is also a key storytelling avenue for the township whereby we can collect and share updates that demonstrate the work and progress staff are undertaking to maintain and improve the community. Because of direct distribution by mail and self-selected distribution at township facilities, the Current helps relay events, news, etc. to a broad base of community members

Recreation Centre – Reduced Operating Hours

Budget Item: \$50,000

What it is

This item proposes reducing the Recreation Centre’s operating hours by 1hr per day M-F and 2hrs on weekends. Weekday hours would shift from 5:30 a.m.–10:30 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.–10:00 p.m., and weekend hours from 5:30 a.m.–10:30 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.–9:00 p.m. This reduction removes 9 operating hours per week and generates approximately \$50,000 in staffing savings annually.

Why it is important

Extended operating hours supports equitable access for early-morning fitness users, shift workers, families, older adults, and residents with demanding schedules. Off-peak hours help distribute attendance throughout the day, reducing crowding and improving the overall user experience. Maintaining broad access also supports community wellbeing and aligns with expectations for a full-service municipal recreation facility.

Risks of removing it from the budget

While the reduced hours generate cost savings, they may also create unintended operational and financial impacts. Eliminating off-peak hours will shift a portion of early-morning and late-evening users into already busy prime-time periods. This increased pressure on peak hours can lead to crowding, reduced equipment availability, longer wait times, and an overall decline in service quality. These impacts may reduce customer satisfaction and contribute to membership cancellations or lower participation—offsetting potential savings through lost revenue. Weekend time reductions may also affect family usage, rentals, and drop-in admissions. Overall, compressing service hours may negatively impact user experience, limit flexibility for residents with non-traditional schedules, and reduce the Recreation Centre’s ability to meet community service expectations.

Recreation Centre – Statutory Holiday Closure

Budget Item: \$25,000

What it is

This item proposes closing the Recreation Centre on all statutory holidays. Currently, the facility operates regular hours on all but 2 (Dec 25th and Jan 1st) statutory holiday days. This service requires staffing levels that rely heavily on statutory wages (overtime). Closing the facility would eliminate the need for statutory-holiday staffing and significantly reduce overtime costs. This change would alter a long-standing practice, as the Recreation Centre has remained open on statutory holidays for approximately 22 years. Strong customer attendance on these statutory days has supported this service level over the years.

Why it is important

Remaining open on statutory holidays provides valued access for residents who rely on recreation services during family gatherings, school breaks, and days when other community amenities are closed. These openings support physical activity, social connection, and community inclusion. They also align with resident expectations for reliable, year-round access to a major municipal recreation facility. For some residents—particularly shift workers and families balancing complex schedules—statutory-holiday access is one of the few opportunities for shared recreation time.

Risks of removing it from the budget-

Closing the facility on statutory holidays may reduce community access during periods of high availability and could lead to negative public feedback, as users have come to rely on this service for two decades. There is a risk of reduced customer satisfaction, loss of goodwill, and potential impacts on memberships if residents perceive reduced value in their passes or drop-in options. Holiday closures may also increase crowding on adjacent days as demand compresses into fewer available hours. While the proposal offers meaningful overtime savings, the approach represents a notable service-level change and may impact community expectations and perceived responsiveness.

Macaulay Elementary School Crossing Guards Funding

Budget Item: \$28,392

What it is

The Township of Esquimalt has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with School District No. 61 (SD61) to collaborate on the delivery of a crossing guard program. The Township provides financial contribution to the program. The MOU may be terminated with at least 90 days' prior written notice.

Why it is important

In July 2022, the Greater Victoria Crossing Guards Association, which managed crossing guards across five municipalities, ceased operations because the service was not sustainable under existing funding models. Historically funded by municipal grants and non-profit management, the responsibility for crossing guards in the Greater Victoria School District has shifted toward municipalities and school boards.

With this gap in funding and service delivery, SD61 requested funding for a crossing guard at Macaulay Elementary School. In August 2022, Council authorized funding of \$22,560 for the crossing guard services at Macaulay Elementary School for the 2022/2023 school year. An MOU with SD61 was signed in September 2023.

Risks of removing it from the budget

Terminating the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with School District No. 61 would create an immediate gap in service delivery and significantly increase risks to community safety, particularly for elementary-aged children.

South Island Powwow Sponsorship

Budget Item: \$10,000

What it is

The budget item represents the Township's contribution towards the Songhees Nation's hosted South Island Powwow. The South Island Powwow is held annually on September 30 on the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. The Township is a Gold Sponsor.

Why it is important

The South Island Powwow is a local Songhees Nation-led event that brings together Indigenous Peoples, residents, and visitors to celebrate Indigenous culture, traditions, and resilience. Holding the event on the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation provides a meaningful opportunity for learning, reflection, and relationship-building between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

The Township's sponsorship demonstrates a tangible commitment to reconciliation, respect for Indigenous Peoples, and support for First Nations-led cultural initiatives. As a highly visible public event, the sponsorship also aligns with the Township's strategic priorities related to healthy and engaged communities.

Risks of removing it from the budget

Removing this sponsorship would reduce the Township's visible and practical support for reconciliation efforts and Indigenous-led cultural initiatives. Given the significance of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, withdrawing funding may be perceived as inconsistent with the Township's stated commitments to reconciliation. Reduced municipal sponsorship could also place additional financial pressure on the event organizers and limit the scale or accessibility of the Powwow. Eliminating this funding may weaken the Township's relationship with the Songhees Nation and reduce opportunities for continued collaboration and trust-building moving forward.

Contingency

Budget Item: \$250,000

What it is

As the Township is unable to budget for a surplus or deficit, an amount is included in the financial plan each year to provide a buffer for any unforeseen costs that could arise during the year. While the amounts vary, there are items each year that are funded through this account

Risks of removing/reducing the amount

Staff have consistently expressed concern that the current contingency account balance may be too low given the size and complexity of the Township budget. Without this account, departments would need to identify specific areas where they could reduce or defer certain service level items to fund these types of expenditures. After the reduction or removal of a contingency amount, any future reinstatement or increase in the account would require an increase in taxation revenue within the financial plan.

Public Art Reserve Contribution

Budget Item: \$20,414

What it is

In accordance with Public Art Reserve Fund Bylaw, No 2878, an amount equivalent to 1% of the contributions to the Capital Project Reserve Fund are held in a separate reserve account. These funds are intended to be used for the acquisition and maintenance of public art on public land within the municipality.

This reserve, established in 2016, currently holds a December 31, 2025 balance of \$139,711 before any 2026 contributions have been made.

Risks of removing it from the budget

In addition to impacting the ability to fund potential project, there would be no 2026 contributions made to the reserve. Any future contributions would need to be re-established in the financial plan and would require an increase in revenue to offset these contributions.