

From: [Nina Sylvester](#)
To: [Council](#)
Subject: VicPD budget
Date: January-08-26 11:50:33 AM

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Dear City Councillors

I'm writing to oppose VicPD's draft 2026 budget. VicPD receives a disproportionate amount of municipal funding at the expense of community and social services that keep people safe.

Please reject the proposed 2026 budget increase for VicPD, including the hiring of 25 new officers. I would also encourage you to look for opportunities to reduce the existing police budget to further invest in community supports and services.

Thank you,

Nina S.

Esquimalt, BC

From: [David Hodgins](#)
To: [Council](#)
Cc: [McLean, Stephanie - M.P.](#); [Rotchford, MLA, Darlene](#)
Subject: Township of Esquimalt - Proposed Tax Increase 2026
Date: January-09-26 1:30:42 PM

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Council, are you seriously considering a 13% tax increase? This must be fake news.

I'm thinking that Council's publicly messaging the potential for a 13% increase is a con job approach known as "bait and switch", whereby you communicate a potential unbelievable tax increase and, at the end of the day, you come back with a 9% increase and the taxpayers are then supposed to be fooled into believing we got a good deal.

Council, you need to find real savings. The so called deep pockets of the residents are empty! One workable solution to control the tax rate is to eliminate the totally ineffective Corporate ByLaw Services Division. Have a good look around our community and you will see why I make this suggestion. Another tax saving solution is to dramatically reduce the bloated Township's bureaucracy and associated out of control salaries.

Council, given the very challenging economic situation the residents of Esquimalt are dealing with, any tax increase beyond the reported annual cost of living percentage is absolutely and totally unacceptable.

Respectfully submitted,

E. David Hodgins

Townhome #2
1115 Craigflower Roas
Esquimalt, BC V9A 7R1
[REDACTED]

Molly Harris

From: Dan Bruyere <[REDACTED]>
Sent: January-10-26 12:25 PM
To: Council
Subject: Bruyere Bytes #6 - 2026 Budget

Categories: Inputted in to Mail Log

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Good afternoon, Mayor and Council. As we are now into the 2026 property tax calculation cycle, please consider my questions and concerns as outlined below. Since we purchased our home in late 2021, our tax bill has increased by 33.9%. More recently, I've seen increases of 9.4, 5.3 and 10.1% for 2023, 2024, and 2025 respectively, while over the same period the assessed value of my home has decreased by - 3.0% (CAO Horan asked me about assessed valuation in our meeting last year but I had to check). Something is not adding up.

A quick survey of municipalities in BC slots Esquimalt on the higher end of the list: lower (more affordable) than Powell River, Kamloops, Nanaimo, Campbell River, Victoria and Saanich, but higher (more expensive) than Colwood, Sooke, Langford and Sidney. This is for tax assessments on a home valued close to my own per the latest notice. Make no mistake, we are in a competitive market when people and businesses are considering a move in or out of a municipality, and property taxes are a significant factor in those considerations. Why settle for the middle when we can be among the best?

Esquimalt has the potential to be a destination for people from across the country to retire or work or open businesses (see the Rosemead Inn) for all the reasons I'm sure you are aware of, but high property taxes will have an impact on those decisions. There may be a certain indifference to the tax burden from some longer term residents as they have done well in the valuations of their homes over the past 10 or 20 years, the result being they defer their taxes knowing that there will be a reckoning at such time as they sell. I guess the feeling is that sure, I owe \$60 or \$70k in back taxes (plus interest) but having made a million dollars on valuations, it's no big deal. However, this will not extend to the prospective "new" residents such as ourselves as we pay the full freight, and it will affect the ability to sell an existing home, or rent an apartment for that matter (property taxes affect rental rates too). Further, being competitive is becoming even more important as last year the Business Council of British Columbia, which tracks interprovincial migration, found that out-migration of B.C. residents to other provinces surged to almost 70,000 people over the last few years. The business council said this was a record level — by comparison, the next closest peaks in out-migration were 64,000 in 1998 and 65,000 in 1975.

As in the past, I strongly recommend we bend the curve in our tax increase back toward what we saw in 2019 and 2020, which was 1.3 and 2.7% respectively. Discretionary spending needs to be studied closely, and reduced to accommodate mandatory spending such as union increases, for example. Our target should be inflation - currently pegged at 2.2% as of November 2025 - plus or minus verifiable, real population growth from the previous year. To continue with the increases we have seen over the past few years, and which are baked into the 5 year plan, is unsustainable from a tax-payer perspective.

To better understand the Town's tax strategy, I reviewed the "Budget Book 2025" posted on your website, aka Budget Overview 2025, which contains the 5 year plan out to 2029. While there is a lot of information and data presented therein, I do have questions and I present some, but not all, of them below:

1. On page 10, under "Consolidated Budget - 5 Year Plan", property taxes revenues are forecast to grow from \$25.5 million to \$34.3 million by 2029, a 34.3% increase. As I have already experienced that since purchasing in 2021, that gives one pause. Again, not sustainable from a household budget point of view. What assumptions have been made to arrive at this forecasted increase?
2. On page 4, staffing has increased by 16 FTEs (130 to 146) from 2021 to 2025, representing a 12.3% increase. As stated on page 8, "[Salaries, wages and benefits increase: The most significant cost driver for the annual budget continues to be labour related costs which represent more than half of the Township's operating budget expenses](#)". According to the 2021 Census by Statistics Canada, Esquimalt is home to 17,533 residents, representing a -0.7% change from the 2016 Census. Does Council have data to show we have grown since 2021? What are the drivers for increasing staff? I would recommend a hiring freeze until such time as the 2026 Census is complete so we can see how the population has changed, up or down, and the new Council can address those challenges (2026 being an election year). The Town could also consider increasing the use of contractors, or contract staff, thereby avoiding the liability of benefits (S&D, collective bargaining, retirement plans, severance allowances, etc.) which accrue to employees. For example, this past year the Town constructed a utility shed in Centennial Park and I observed Town employees and equipment working there over several months. Budget Project Number R267 was assigned to this construction for \$35,000, which seems a lot for a shed. How did we do? Could a contractor who specializes in shed building (including electrical components) have been a more competitive option? The same question could be applied against Town staff putting up and taking down Christmas decorations, as I saw this week. There are companies that do this which are likely cost competitive versus assigning the Township's skilled union employees with Town trucks and equipment to these tasks. Finally, we need to consider the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on many administrative positions. The onset of AI should only make those roles more efficient and expand the capacity of existing staff.
3. There is further commentary in the document that the Town is under pressure to provide support in non-traditional areas like affordable housing, homelessness, climate change, accessibility, etc., but perhaps it is time to start pushing back on some of these obligations being down-loaded from the province. For example, as mentioned in my note to Council of October 20, 2025, the Provincial government spends billions on related issues (2023 - \$1.5B for homeless prevention and reduction efforts, plus \$4.3B for subsidized housing, which includes support for those currently homeless or unstably housed). Many support organizations have sprung up (e.g. Our Place, Salvation Army, SHVDES, Solid, etc.) in the CRD and around the province, so there appears to be no shortage of supporting funding and infrastructure which of course is also funded by our provincial income and other tax dollars.
4. Also on page 10 in the 5 year plan, why are department cost recoveries flat at \$835,450 per year from 2025 to 2029? Can this be grown? Perhaps we should look at other sources of revenue, like bike licenses (to offset the costs of the concrete barriers and their maintenance), increased fees for users of our recreational facilities for those from other municipalities who don't pay into our tax burden, metered parking at those same facilities (including the Gorge Pavilion) with a pass for Esquimalt residences, higher "chicken" fees for the backyard hen houses springing up around us, higher event fees for use of the Gorge Pavilion and other Town assets, etc. Of course there would be an additional administrative burden to manage this, but I would suggest the additional

administrative burden could be handled by the existing Town staff - as their experience grows in their current roles, and with the application of AI, so too would their efficiency expand.

5. On page 11, Policing, which includes annual cost increases and new resource additions, represents a significant component of the annual operating budget. For 2025, on a single department basis, the police budget of \$10.8 million is only eclipsed by Parks and Rec at \$11.0 million. The police budget is forecast to grow to \$11.8 million in 2026, and to \$14.9 million by 2029. This seems high for a small township of 18,000 people ([recent policing costs per capita 2024-2026: Victoria:\\$598 \(highest in BC\), Esquimalt:\\$456, Saanich:\\$350, Colwood:\\$263, Langford:\\$214](#)). I understand that Council has been studying options to segregate ourselves from the arrangement with VicPD, but so far we have been unable to pull that trigger. However, short of starting from scratch, there may be an opening to reduce our share of the VicPD's budget which is currently around 14%: Section 11.2 of the police framework agreement of 2014 states "[it is anticipated that the Budget Allocation Formula shall take into account factors based on the actual experience during the operation of the Agreement and will utilize quantifiable criteria which reflect each Municipality's relative need for police resources](#)". Can we take advantage of this clause to reduce our percentage share of the overall police budget as I think we can agree the activities requiring police attention in the two municipalities have shifted over the past 12 years? An example of "quantifiable criteria" could be the "Calls for Service" chart presented by VPD at a recent Town meeting. From Q2 2024 to Q2 2025, dispatched calls for Esquimalt amounted to 7.58% of all calls, the balance being for Victoria calls. This metric puts the lie to Esquimalt being responsible for 14% of the VPD Budget, and my guess is that other data, from time sheets for example, would show a similar trend. As well, in 2024 we approved the addition of an Reintegration Sergeant for \$198,000 (plus benefits) to work with the other officers on leave to return to active duty more quickly, thereby reducing overtime. Has this position been effective? What metrics do we have to show the success? [Has this mitigated VPD's recently stated intention that they will be filling 25 more police positions this year \(16 new, 9 previously approved\)](#)? Please note that Councillor Boardman, our new representative on the Police Board, and I have had discussions on this over the latter part of last year so she may have made headway on this already. I would also suggest leaning on our new MLA, Darlene Rotchford, to help shepherd a fair reduction of our share through the provincial government as she would be fully apprised of the issue from her days on Esquimalt's Town Council (full disclosure, I recently reached out to Darlene on this matter as well).
6. On Page 11, Parks and Rec has the highest departmental spending at almost \$11 million dollars in 2025, and grows each year to a forecasted \$12 million in 2029. As mentioned above, perhaps we could consider increasing fees to offset some of this increase. Also, as the pool is the warmest in the city, have we calculated the energy savings by lowering it by 3 or 4 degrees, making it more economic while at the same time making it more of a recreational pool, rather than a soaker pool for our more sedentary customers (and less GHGs emitted). Finally, I have anecdotal reports that many of the people using this facility are from other than Esquimalt, and thus would not contribute to our tax base.
7. There is a debate on service levels and whether they are appropriate and sustainable. Perhaps they are too high. I for one would accept lower service levels in some areas if that would give Council some breathing room in keeping taxes low. For example, staying with Parks and Recreation, and being as it has the highest spending of any department, perhaps we should audit its activities and benchmark against appropriate municipalities to see if our service levels there exceed requirements. Do we need as many staff there or can they be reassigned? Do we need to weed, water and clip as much as we do now?

8. On page 8, under Budget Drivers, the document states that "[rather than applying a standard increase to all budgets, departments review their budgets and adjust where required, using actual costs, inflation rates and market information as applicable](#)". Given my increases of 9.4, 5.3 and 10.1% over the past three years, with a decreased assessed value, perhaps this isn't working as well as one might hope. Maybe it's time for Council to assign a target of, say inflation plus real population growth, and expect the departments to meet that target. Hold their feet to the fire, as it were. Unavoidable costs, such as those driven by collective bargaining agreements, would have to be offset by reductions in discretionary spending. It can be done as we have seen recently in other municipalities (see below).

There are still more areas for conservation of spending but this gives a flavour, and though it may seem like an impossible task, there are recent examples of where the challenge of reducing or minimizing taxes is being met:

- The City of Vancouver has passed a 2026 budget with a freeze on municipal property taxes, ie **0%**, added \$50 million more for the city's police department, and enacted a host of cuts to a number of other departments including urban design and sustainability (-14%), environmental and facilities management (-13%), finance and supply chain management (-14%), and arts, culture, and community services (-15%).
- The City of Calgary had an 8.9% increase in 2025 and began 2026's process with a budget increase presented by staff of 5.4% but ended with 1.6% by holding departments to account, raising transit fees, cutting environmental programs by \$9 million, reducing office conversion programs (office towers converted to homes for the unhoused) by \$5 million, and removing mental health and addictions funding from their base budget to a one-time program.

In my working career, I always made a conscious effort to treat any money I was spending on behalf of our partners as if it were my own. That didn't always endear me to our company's Operations groups, but it kept the ship afloat. I'm sure Council feels the same way when it comes to spending our tax dollars.

On a final note, the other day I was at Costco and noted that a medium sized "oven roast", nothing fancy, was priced at \$185, and a bag of essential groceries at Country Grocers is routinely \$100 or more. Affordability of food and shelter continues to rank as the highest concern for most Canadians, and this will continue in 2026. This is the environment in which Council has to consider their options as we move toward fixing the 2026 tax rates. Tough times call for courageous decisions, and taxpayers need a break.

I hope Council finds this helpful, and perhaps raises a few questions and opportunities not yet considered. If you need any more information or input, please do not hesitate to reach out. As is my practice, I will share this note with my friends and colleagues as well so I may have more commentary for Council as the 2026 budget develops.

Regards,
Dan Bruyere
Esquimalt

(Bruyere Bytes No's. 1 through 5 available on request)

Molly Harris

From: Doug Hughes <[REDACTED]>
Sent: January-11-26 9:02 AM
To: Corporate Services
Subject: Budget

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I have reviewed the proposed budget for next year. Policing costs continue to outpace all expenditures and will do so again next year as well. I am not sure what options are available but citizens can't continue to absorb these continued budget increases year after year. It's also not clear how the increase in policing will make Esquimalt safer. Value for money? Esquimalt Council will have to push back against the new Police Chief's desire to empire build. Thank you for the opportunity to comment and I look forward to a reduced tax bill in the coming year.

Douglas Hughes
1240 Bewdley Ave
Esquimalt
Sent from my iPhone

January 12, 2026

Esquimalt Councilors & Mayor
Township of Esquimalt
1229 Esquimalt Rd
Esquimalt BC, V9A 3P1

Re: Property Tax Increases

Dear Members of Esquimalt Council,

I am writing to request that you do your utmost to find ways to either reduce the proposed budget, and ultimately the subsequent residential property tax increase currently under consideration or find other sources of revenue to support the proposed budget increase other than residential property tax increases.

Like many residents, I am already facing rising costs for housing, utilities, groceries, insurance, and other necessities. An increase in property taxes, especially considering the large increases of the previous few years, would place an additional financial burden on homeowners and renters alike, particularly seniors, working families, and those on fixed incomes. For many in our community, even a modest increase can make it harder to remain in their homes. These large increases are gradually squeezing out community members that make Esquimalt what it is. The families and long-time residents that call Esquimalt home cannot bear this much longer.

While I recognize the township's financial obligations, and I appreciate the work you do to maintain essential services and infrastructure, I urge the council to consider the cumulative impact of repeated tax hikes and to explore alternative budget solutions before asking residents to pay more yet again.

Thank you for your time and for considering the concerns of your constituents. I urge you to work toward solutions that protect affordability and economic stability in our community.

Sincerely,



Kimberly (Boon) Argyle

1247 Colville Road
Esquimalt, BC V9A4R2

Molly Harris

From: Boon Argyle <[REDACTED]>
Sent: January-12-26 10:54 AM
To: Barbara Desjardins
Cc: Council
Subject: Re: 2026 Property Tax Increase

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Hi Barb,

Thanks for replying to my letter.

I think reviewing rec center hours of operation is a great idea.

Another item that I had read about somewhere is proposed new EV stations. Is this really a must-have right now?

I'm thinking along the lines of what are necessities for living vs. what are extras that could wait or should be scrapped for the time being.

I really know nothing about the Arena floor replacement project, but the same question...is it absolutely necessary? But maybe that ship has already sailed.

Is a bigger increase from PILT a possibility?

As I look at the 2025 budget book, I'm seeing things like \$50,000 for Reception Desk Enclosure. That seems like an astronomical amount for a relatively small project. Are things like this being analyzed? All the little things add up!

Thanks for your consideration!

Boon

Kimberly (Boon) Argyle

On Mon, Jan 12, 2026 at 10:01 AM Barbara Desjardins <Barbara.Desjardins@esquimalt.ca> wrote:
Kimberley

Thank you for your email. I appreciate your input. Council will discuss the various levers we have to reduce the tax increase which includes service delivery reduction. I would really appreciate your thoughts on this for example reducing rec center hours from 10 pm to 8 pm. I have no basis for those numbers just wanted to illustrate what a service reduction might be

Barbara Desjardins, (She/Her)
Mayor
Lekwungen Territory

Township of Esquimalt | Council

Tel: 1-250-883-1944 | www.esquimalt.ca

**Honoured & privileged to work on the ləkʷəŋən traditional territory
and respectfully acknowledge the people of the Songhees Nation and
Kosapsun Nation. Nətsəmat (We are all One) həyšxʷqə.**



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On Jan 12, 2026, at 9:36 AM, Boon Argyle [REDACTED] wrote:

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Please find my letter to council attached regarding one of tonight's agenda items:
2026 Draft Budget

Thanks kindly,
Kimberly (Boon) Argyle
<Letter to Council re Property Tax Increase Jan.12.2026.docx>