

Background Report

Presented To: Mayor Charbonneau
Presented By: Kara Van Myall, Chief Administrative Officer
Meeting Date: February 17, 2026
Subject: Response to Mayoral Direction 2026-001

Report Summary

Saugeen Shores continues to demonstrate strong financial stewardship and proactive planning in response to both community growth and evolving needs. Council's recent decision to utilize the Tax Stabilization Reserve in response to taxpayer concerns, is a one-time reduction that will need to be made up over the life of the Town's 10-year Operating Plan.

Staff have been directed to prepare a financial plan to reduce the Town's reliance on \$470,000 from the Tax Stabilization Reserve to lower municipal operating costs. This \$470,000 translates to \$46 on the average household (assessed at \$314,000) and represents a 1.8% incremental tax increase. This overview responds to that directive by reviewing the Town's financial health and identifying potential operational reductions for the 2027-2035 Business Plan to mitigate reserve usage.

Background/Analysis

The Town's 2023-2027 Strategic Plan is organized around four strategic pillars: Meeting the Needs of a Growing Community, Building the Best Municipal Team, Building Valued Relationships, and Fostering a Vibrant Place to Live and Visit. Together, these pillars reflect Council's commitment to sustainable growth, infrastructure stewardship, service excellence, strong partnerships, and a high quality of life for residents and visitors.

Council's priorities for the four-year term are embedded within the Strategic Directions under each pillar, emphasizing practical actions to accommodate population growth and strengthen municipal services. Council also prioritized welcoming newcomers, supporting local business development, and nurturing a vibrant community that appeals to both residents and visitors. These priorities collectively support long-term growth management and reinforce the Town's mission to improve the lives of its citizens. An important example of putting the pillars of the Strategic Plan into action was the development and historic signing of the Friendship Accord with Saugeen First Nation which would not have advanced unless prioritized in the Town's Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan directly informs the Town's Annual Business Plan and Budget, shaping service delivery and resource allocation to meet the needs of a growing community. With Council's clear direction, staff develop the annual Business Plan and Budget to operationalize these priorities—ensuring that housing initiatives, infrastructure expansion, talent recruitment, and community building efforts are translated into concrete projects and measurable service improvements. All departmental plans flow out of our Strategic Plan, ensuring alignment across the organization, coordinated capital investment, and continuous improvement in service delivery to support a growing and evolving community.

Growth

The Town of Saugeen Shores has seen a **16%** increase in population since the last census—nearly three times the provincial average. This momentum, sustained through consecutive census years is attracting families with children under 15 (**27.8%**) and adults aged 25 to 44 (**29.4%**), reflecting the appeal of a setting that offers both a growing town and the welcoming rural environment. The population of residents aged 65 and older has grown by **36.2%** since the last census, further highlighting the Town's appeal to those seeking a balanced lifestyle post-retirement.

This sustained growth has placed increasing pressure on municipal infrastructure, facilities, and services. In response, the Town has taken deliberate action to expand capacity, enhance service delivery, and ensure community assets continue to meet the needs of a larger and more diverse population. Over the term of Council, these pressures have translated into tangible investments and visible progress across the municipality.

Service Levels Increased

Both the Strategic Priorities set by Council and the growth the Town is experiencing have led to impactful service level increases. *Appendix A* outlines more detail on some of these priority service level increases and their impacts. These enhancements have been implemented to support the community's needs.

Key accomplishments include the construction of additional ball diamonds at Lamont Sports Park with enhanced gravel maintenance at the park, and the addition of more kilometers of roads and sidewalks under municipal responsibility. The Town has also increased the number of special events, supported organizations like the Southampton Art School, and is piloting a year-round ice program. Further, there have been notable expansions including the Pryde Aquatic and Wellness Centre, with both new aquatic and dryland programming introduced, as well as upgrades at Helliwell, Jubilee and Northshore Parks. Building on this, the Town's community engagement and corporate communications program has strengthened transparency, improved access to information, and enabled broader, more meaningful resident participation in municipal decision-making.

These investments and enhanced services reflect Saugeen Shores' proactive management of growth and commitment to improving residents' quality of life, directly Council's Strategic Priorities.

Taxes Remain Low

Considering the rate of growth in Saugeen Shores and the accompanying Service Level Increases, Saugeen Shores continues to have one of the lowest tax rates in Bruce County. Saugeen Shores comparable Tax Rates for this term of Council (2023-2026) are illustrated in *Appendix B*.

For the last three years, Saugeen Shores has been below the average of the Bruce County comparator Tax Increases and tends to be one of the lowest. In 2026, the **average tax rate increase** of the eight municipalities was 3.91%, Saugeen Shores was the **second lowest** at 2.6%.

Additionally, Saugeen Shores maintains **moderate to competitive tax rate** compared to other municipalities of similar size in Ontario. The BMA Management study referenced in *Appendix B* shows that the Town's **residential tax rate falls within the low to medium range** for comparable communities, demonstrating that Saugeen Shores continues to balance growth related investments with responsible taxation.

Financial Health Remains High

The Tax Stabilization Reserve (TSR) is the key indicator of operating financial health. This reserve allows for one-time expenses without affecting taxes and helps manage revenue and expense fluctuations throughout the year. A consistent decline would indicate financial issues, but normal annual fluctuations due to special expenditures do not impact overall financial stability. The reserve has a projected \$4 million balance in 2025. The Business Plan, prior to the \$470,000 use of the TSR, did not build in a systemic decline in the reserve.

A systemic decline to a reserve is caused by a structural deficit which is a long-term operating budget shortfall that will worsen the Town's finances over time. A structural deficit can be simply worded as "using reserves to pay for fixed operating expenses".

Structural deficits cause the reserve balance to steadily decrease, and if left unaddressed, can eventually place the reserve into a negative position. At that point, future Councils would be compelled to correct the budget imbalance, requiring tax increases or service reductions—and explaining to residents that these actions address a deficit created years earlier.

Saugeen Shores presently maintains strong financial health as a result of Council's prudent oversight of the Business Plan and its use of reserves. Council permits the use of the Tax Stabilization Reserve for one-time expenditures but traditionally has not allowed structural deficits that would compromise the Town's long-term financial stability.

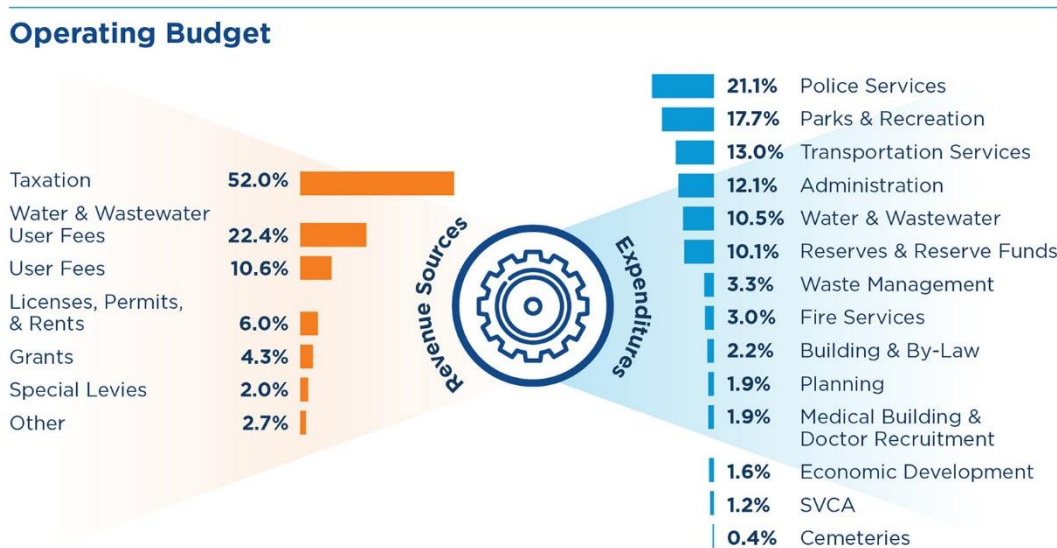
Considerations for Operating Budget Reductions

For the 2026 budget, Council approved using \$470,000 from the Tax Stabilization Reserve to reduce taxes by \$46 on the average household (assessed at \$314,000) to help households facing higher costs and economic challenges. If this allocation is not counter-balanced, it could create a structural deficit and lead to an ongoing reduction in the Tax Stabilization Reserve. To

prevent this, the Mayor has asked staff to propose options to bring the 2027 Business Plan into balance, ensuring the Town maintains its strong financial position.

The \$470,000 Tax Stabilization Reserve usage in 2026 could be offset by an incremental increase in 2027 to ensure that a structural deficit is not created. This would **represent a 1.8% Incremental Tax Increase to the 2027 Business Plan**. In addition, if a minimum 2% inflation is assumed, it means that Council will be considering a 3.8% increase to taxes to continue to provide the current service levels. There may also be extraordinary external impacts that typically occur from areas like Police Service or Provincial changes (reduced funding, increased regulatory burden, etc.) that will impact the starting place for 2027 deliberations.

From the [2025 Annual Report](#), presented to Council on February 23, 2026, Council and the public can see where the majority of the Town’s Operating Expenses are. The table below is a quick reference:



With the Police Services representing over 20% of expenditures and Council’s discussion focused on reductions to the remainder of the Town’s Operations, the following areas were examined to reduce on-going operations by \$470,000 each year over the 10-year plan starting in 2027:

1. Services not Mandated;
2. Community Contributions / Operating Grants;
3. Absorbing Inflation;
4. Operational Reduction by Department 1%;
5. Review of Staffing Positions / Moratorium on Hires in 2027;
6. Delay of Work Program / Consultant Review;
7. Revenue Generating Opportunities; and
8. Town Memberships – Non-Mandatory.

Outlined below is a review of each of these areas. *Appendix C* outlines the *List of Potential Operating Reductions* by the areas noted above. 1.8% of reductions will need to be actualized to meet the targeted reduction of \$470,000 for each year of the 2027-2035 Operating Plan.

Note: All the measures indicated in Appendix C cannot necessarily be implemented to achieve cumulative savings; some of these measures affect the same accounts in ways that multiply reductions and cannot realistically be accomplished without serious impacts to services.

1. Services not Mandated

These potential operational reductions target municipal support for services not strictly under municipal responsibility including activities related to physician recruitment, retention and incentives (Cost \$150,000). It should be noted that there are on-going obligations contained within this budget line that the Town would need to address.

An additional opportunity is to reduce the recycling collection the Town decided to provide for Industrial, Commercial and Institutional (ICI) properties who are currently not eligible under the province’s new producer pay model (\$160,000). Lastly, the Town could consider reducing or removing its funding contribution (\$225,000) to Bruce County's rent subsidy program.

Overall, these measures represent significant cost savings in areas that are not a municipal responsibility. Removing these expenditures over the 10-year plan would be impactful but would also reduce service levels or eliminate support for affected sectors and residents. **Total Impact - 2.2%**

2. Community Contributions / Operating Grants

The Town annually provides \$25,000 in Community Contributions grants as well as a number of annual operating grants to various groups and organizations. In 2027, Council could consider removing the annual Community Contribution grant from the 10-year Plan and / or removing or reducing operating grants to various community groups and organizations.

The measures represent savings over the 10-year Plan and would impact a number of groups and organizations within the municipality. **Total Impact - 0.3%**

3. Absorbing Inflation

To maintain responsible budgeting, annually through the Business Plan, Council applies annual inflation to operating expenses, so they remain aligned with rising costs and to avoid shortfalls.

Two examples of how this is applied are provided in the table below for the annual sand and salt budget and the Fire Dispatch contract:

	2026	2027	2028	2029
Winter Control Sand/Salt	\$102,322	\$103,857	\$105,415	\$106,996
Year Over Year Change	-	\$1,535	\$1,558	\$1,581
Fire Dispatch	\$36,429	\$37,704	\$39,024	\$40,194
Year Over Year Change	-	\$1,275	\$1,320	\$1,170

The Town could absorb inflation in 2027, resuming inflationary increases again in 2028. This one year of absorption of inflation across all operational lines would have **Total Impact 2027 - 0.6%** to the tax rate in 2027. Absorbing inflation across all expense accounts carries risks that inflation cannot be offset by efficiencies alone. As a result, there is the potential that service levels may be adversely impacted.

4. Operational Reduction by Department 1%

Staff have done an analysis of all the Operational lines in their respective Departments with the request to find a 1% reduction for each Department. This 1% reduction is not just for 2027 but is a permanent reduction or elimination of the budget identified in *Appendix C*. Below is the target for each Department to meet the 1% Target:

Office of the CAO – Target \$20,000
Community Services – Target \$89,000
Corporate Services – Target \$54,000
Development Services – Target \$40,000
Fire Services – Target \$17,000
Operations – Target \$57,000

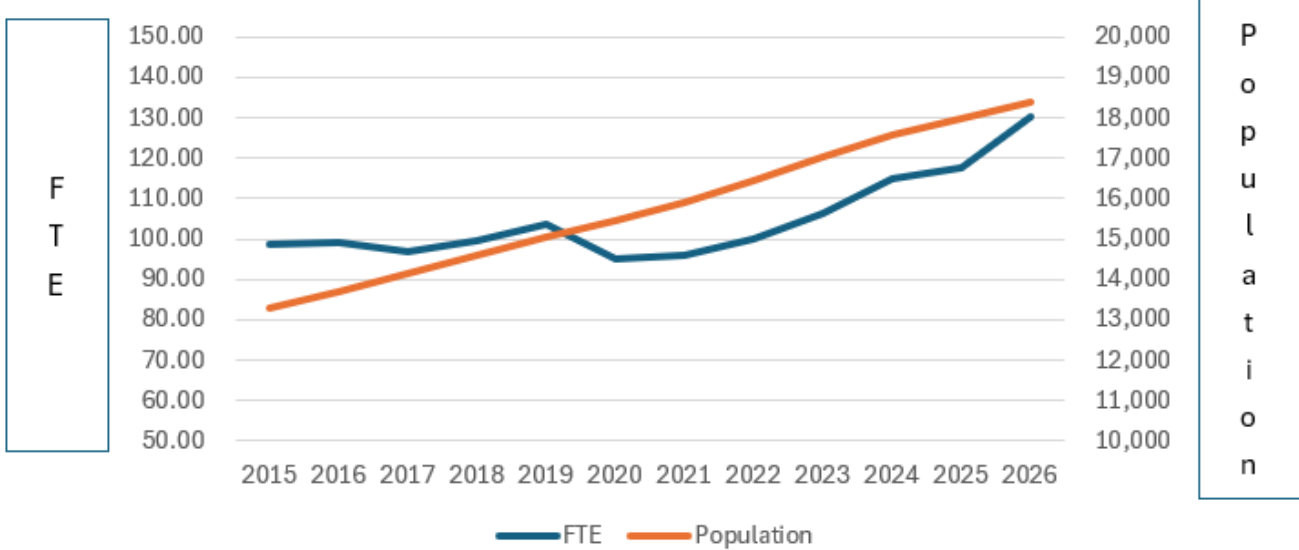
This \$277,000 reduction represents a potential **Total Impact - 1.2%**. The types of impacts expected by reducing service levels or eliminating services by reducing department budgets by 1% include decreased communication to the public, decreased maintenance levels, reduced asset management, and priorities that are not advanced.

5. Review of Staffing Positions / Moratorium on Hires in 2027

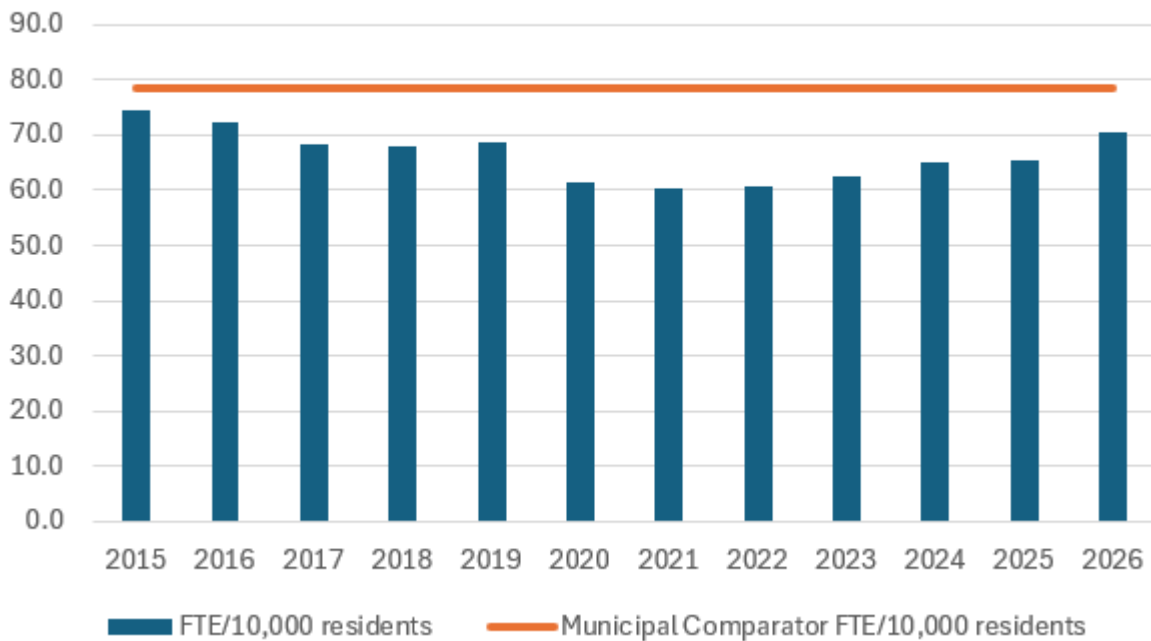
To deliver the service the residents of the Town of Saugeen Shores have come to expect, and to manage the increase in growth, the Town undertook a Municipal Service Level Review (MSDR) in 2021. The review concluded the Town has a strong staff and financial foundation on which to build and develop the necessary frameworks and structures to successfully meet the service demands of its growth. The review also noted a lower permanent full-time staff per capita than its comparator municipalities and identified several organizational structure improvements. In November 2021, Council approved a modernization of the Town organizational structure.

The new structure created capacity in several key strategic and operational areas to mitigate succession risk, improve overall service delivery capacity and meet the growth needs and expectations of the community. The positions created through this review brought the staffing compliment in line with the growth trajectory of the municipality (*see table below*).

FTEs (excluding AWC & Police)



FTEs/10,000 Residents (excl AWC & Police)



The chart above demonstrates between 2015 and 2026, the Town’s full-time equivalent (FTE) (excluding AWC and Police) remained below the municipal average (South Bruce Peninsula, Kincardine, Blue Mountains, Hanover, Owen Sound, Arran-Elderslie, Georgian Bluffs and Brockton). The data indicates a decrease in FTEs from 2020 to 2022, primarily due to the impact of COVID-19, which led to reduced operational hours and staff vacancies. In 2021, Council approved the MSDR, which recommended hiring additional staff to enhance Town services and better align with comparable municipalities. This resulted in an increase in FTEs

beginning in 2022, bringing the Town closer to, but still below, the 2015 FTE/10,000 residents staffing levels required to appropriately serve our community.

Budget constraints could be addressed by postponing all new staffing proposals for 2027 by one year. This would decrease spending by \$30,000 over the 10-year Plan. The impact is minimal because three of the proposed positions are funded by revenue, so they don't affect the net budget. **Total Impact - 0.1%**

Additionally, if Council wanted to review the organizational structure of the Town, as was done in the Municipal Service Delivery Review in 2021, it is recommended the CAO be directed to include that work as part of the 2027 Business Plan where a detailed assessment and review can be undertaken.

6. Delay of Work Program / Consultant Review

Two areas were examined to find potential tax savings:

1. Maintain current operations without adding new work or increasing service levels in 2027 and;
2. Review recurring programs and consider extending the review cycle to 5 or 6 years from the existing 4 year cycle. **Total Impact - 0.3%**

By delaying expansion of the work program and focusing on established programs, the Town would limit spending growth and ensure fiscal stability. However, the impact would include slower responsiveness to emerging community needs and a potential delay in service improvements or enhancements. Extending the review cycle could also result in less frequent evaluation and adjustment of program effectiveness, which may affect the Town's ability to adapt quickly to changing demands.

Several of the items listed in the delay of work program engage consultants. Engaging consultants, rather than relying on existing staff resources, allows the Town to access specialized expertise and objective perspectives for specific projects or challenges. Consultants often bring industry best practices, experience from similar municipalities, and technical skills that may not be available in-house allowing the Town to "rent the expertise". This approach helps to address complex or time-sensitive issues efficiently without overburdening the current workplan, including responsibilities to maintaining daily operations and service delivery.

7. Revenue Generating Opportunities

The Community Services Department has opportunities to increase revenue by focusing on user groups rather than general taxpayers. Specifically, staff reviewed the ball diamond, soccer and ice rental rates and provided options to increase the revenue by either a 5% or a 10% option.

Raising ball diamond, soccer, and ice rental fees would increase costs for user groups, potentially leading to lower participation or higher registration fees, and could make access more difficult for organizations with limited budgets. On the other hand, shifting more costs to service users enables the Town to increase revenue without raising property taxes. This approach ensures that taxpayers are not burdened with higher taxes, while those who utilize the facilities contribute directly to covering their expenses. **Total Impact – 0.4%**

8. Town's Membership - Non-Mandatory

The Town spends approximately \$8,000 on AMO, \$3,000 on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Organization and \$4,000 on the ROMA conference. Although these are low cost spends that deliver intangible benefits, these costs could be eliminated as they are non-mandatory. **Total Impact – less than 0.1%**

Summary

This review evaluates several strategies for balancing the Town's budget while maintaining service levels and offsetting the \$470,000 use of the Tax Stabilization Reserve in 2026, which if continued, would create a systemic decline in the Town's financial plan.

A comprehensive review was undertaken of seven areas to identify potential opportunities for operational savings and revenue enhancement. Based on feedback, the preferred approach and / or combination of reductions will be brought forward in the 2027 Business Plan and Budget and will be accompanied by no new service level increases funded by the tax levy.

This combined approach will ensure that the incremental tax increase remains as low as possible, recognizing that the starting point will be:

1. Mitigation of 1.8% 2026 Incremental Tax Increase
2. Minimum 2% inflation
3. Extraordinary External Impacts (e.g. Police Services or Provincial Changes).

The 2027 Business Plan and Budget deliberations will be challenging as Council works to mitigate growth and service level pressures with the realities of overcoming a \$470,000 structural deficit.

Linkages

- Strategic Plan Alignment: Pillar 1: Meeting the Needs of a Growing Community
- Business Plan Alignment: CAO Business as Usual

Financial Impacts/Source of Funding

No costs or revenue is associated with this report.

Written By: Senior Leadership Team

Reviewed By: Jim Bundschuh, Director of Corporate Services

Approved By: Kara Van Myall, Chief Administrative Office

Appendix A: Service Level Increases

TITLE	DRIVER	DESCRIPTION
Community Economic Development Initiative	COUNCIL	Multi-year project to lay the foundation for improved relationships and joint efforts around Economic Development culminated in the historic signing of the Friendship Accord
Destination Development Plan	COUNCIL	Through sustained collaboration with BIAs and the business community, the Town advanced a four-season destination strategy that diversified economic growth.
Saugeen Community Tourism Strategy	COUNCIL	Action Item identified in both the Friendship Accord and the Destination Development Plan to deliver meaningful partnership, sustainable tourism, and measurable benefits for residents, businesses, and visitors alike.
Tourism Survey	COUNCIL	This survey translates visitor behaviour into actionable insight, allowing Council to align economic development programs, strategic planning, and tourism investments for maximum local impact.
Public Art	COUNCIL	Five new installations have activated public spaces, reinforced local identity, and contributed to a more vibrant, culturally rich community.
Community Group Business Plan Advisory Services	COUNCIL	Support to strengthen long-term viability and operational readiness of community organizations, (Southampton Art Centre & Sparks Training Centre; similar support for Pumpkinfest is ongoing).
Community Toolkits	COUNCIL	With direct input from BIAs, the updated Community Toolkits establish a coordinated approach to destination / community development for downtown Port Elgin and Southampton. Implementation efforts are now underway.
Innovation Park	COUNCIL	In 2022, Innovation Park was a farm field. Now, this Business Park is a fully serviced & shovel-ready with promotion and negotiations now underway.
International Plowing Match	COUNCIL	The Town is participating in the County Showcase exhibit space at the 2026 IPM, this high-profile regional event, supports economic development, and strengthens our voice at the county level.
Selling of Surplus Land for the Housing Reserve	COUNCIL	Through diligent preparation and the sale of surplus Town-owned land, underused property was converted into dedicated Housing Reserve funding to support future housing delivery.
Positioning of Surplus Lands for Housing Partnerships	COUNCIL	Advancing development approval processes for two surplus Town-owned lands could add about 160 affordable housing units, helping expand supply and ease affordability issues.

Housing Accelerator Fund	COUNCIL	\$3.2 million CMHC Housing Accelerator Fund grant is enabling eight targeted projects that directly incentivize and deliver new housing opportunities, accelerating supply and addressing local housing pressures.
Major Policy Planning Project Execution	COUNCIL/ PROVINCE	Plans / policies delivered since 2002: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tree Canopy Plan - Cultural Heritage Master Plan - Cultural Heritage Official Plan Update - Intensification Design Guideline - Innovation Park Design Guideline - 2-Zone Floodplain Mapping Technical Report - Community Improvement Plan Update - Zoning Update to enable housing development
Climate Change	COUNCIL	The Town's membership in the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Partners for Climate Change Program lays the groundwork for a Climate Action Plan focused on resilience, risk management, and sustainable growth.
Ten-Year Business Plan	COUNCIL	Ten-Year Business Plan establishes a clear, long-term path to close the infrastructure deficit, protect existing assets, and ensure services keep pace with growth in a financially sustainable way.
Sidewalk Plow	COUNCIL	Sidewalk plowing expanded by 20 km (33%) in Port Elgin (2023) and Southampton (2025), adding two routes and improving year-round access and winter safety for residents.
Assumed Roads and Sidewalks	GROWTH	The Town assumed 20 km of sidewalks and 10 km of roads, improving safety, managing long-term costs, and ensuring consistent service levels across the community.
CLI-ECA	PROVINCE	Meeting requirements for stormwater operating, maintenance, and reporting standards to remain compliant and safeguard the community and environment. CLI-ECA stands for Municipal Consolidated Linear Infrastructure – Environmental Compliance Approval.
Lamont Sports Park Operations	COUNCIL	Addition of 6 new ball diamonds and complex amenities (1 existing diamond has been decommissioned).
Special Events	PUBLIC	5 new large-scale annual events added, totalling 34 of annual events increasing economic development in the community with a focus on shoulder seasons.

12 Month Ice Pilot Program	COUNCIL	Added year-round ice program for three years at the Complex increasing revenues and providing a year-round opportunity to users.
Pryde Aquatic and Wellness Centre	COUNCIL	Expanded aquatic programming with 3 additional lanes and leisure pool alongside new dryland and fitness programming initiatives, providing an affordable recreation and community experience.
Helliwell Soccer Fields & Washroom	COUNCIL	Addition of 1 soccer field, lighting of 2 fields, and complex amenities increasing athletic field inventory to support needs of growing user groups, including accessible washroom facilities.
Year-round Portable Washrooms	COUNCIL	Providing 5 portable washrooms year-round improves accessibility, supports public health and community use of public spaces, and enhances the Town's capacity to host events and visitors.
FlashVote	COUNCIL	Launched 12 FlashVote surveys, engaging residents and gathering feedback to guide improved municipal services and responsive decision-making.
Engage Saugeen Shores	COUNCIL	Launched and supported 26 projects on Engage Saugeen Shores, attracting significant community engagement with a total of 79,877 page views and 21,718 downloads of shared information. High participation shows residents are engaged in municipal projects and provides useful feedback for decision-making and improvements.
Firefighters Attendance	GROWTH	Firefighters attended 40% more emergency responses in 5 years highlighting growing service demand.
Public Education Expansion	GROWTH	Developed and instituted fire safety and emergency planning public education team enhancing public safety through proactive prevention and awareness.
Firefighter Certification	PROVINCE	Achieving Provincially mandated certification by July 1, 2026, representing over 3600 hours of training in 2025.
Cancer Prevention	PROVINCE	Adopted Cancer Prevention measures, establishing a joint health and safety committee, updating PPE and uniforms, providing decontamination equipment and time, and creating new policies.
Emergency Management Compliance	PROVINCE	Achieved compliance including equipment, exercises and training.

Appendix B: Saugeen Shores Comparable Tax Rate

2023-2026 Bruce County Municipal Tax Increases

Municipality	2023 Tax Increase	2024 Tax Increase	2025 Tax Increase	2026 Tax Increase
Brockton	7.43%	6.71%	2.61%	2.64%
South Bruce*	7.38%	6.87%	4.32%	2.55%
North Bruce Peninsula	6.45%	8.28%	8.09%	5.88%
Kincardine	6.32%	6.86%	7.13%	2.88%
Saugeen Shores**	6.00%	5.30%	4.30%	2.60%
Arran-Elderslie	6.00%	7.00%	5.00%	4.95%
Huron-Kinloss	4.73%	4.60%	4.75%	6.51%
South Bruce Peninsula	2.97%	3.76%	2.62%	3.25%
AVERAGE (unweighted)	5.91%	6.17%	4.85%	3.91%

← *2026 Preliminary

← **Excluding Special Levy Increase of \$49/average household in 2024-2026

Residential Comparisons - Summary

Residential				
Low	Low-Mid	Mid	Mid-High	High
Elliot Lake	Amherstburg	Aylmer	Aurora	Ajax
Georgian Bluffs	Bracebridge	Caledon	Barrie	Brampton
Greenstone	Brant	Cornwall	Belleville	Burlington
Grey Highlands	Brantford	Essex	Cambridge	Guelph
Hamilton Tp	Brock	Fort Erie	Chatham-Kent	Hamilton
Huntsville	Brockville	Guelph-Eramosa	Chatsworth	Lincoln
Ingersoll	Central Elgin	Haldimand	Erin	Markham
Lakeshore	Centre Wellington	Hanover	Georgina	Mississauga
Lambton Shores	Clarington	Kincardine	Greater Sudbury	Oakville
Laurentian Valley	Collingwood	Kingston	Grimsby	Orangeville
Minto	Dryden	Kitchener	Halton Hills	Owen Sound
North Middlesex	East Gwillimbury	Milton	King	Peterborough
North Perth	Espanola	Niagara-on-the-Lake	London	Pickering
Petawawa	Gravenhurst	Sault Ste. Marie	Newmarket	Port Hope
Prince Edward County	Innisfil	The Blue Mountains	Niagara Falls	Richmond Hill
Ramara	Kenora	Toronto (East)	Oshawa	Scugog
Southgate	Mapleton	West Lincoln	Ottawa	St. Catharines
Springwater	Meaford		Parry Sound	Thunder Bay
Strathroy-Caradoc	Middlesex Centre		Pelham	Timmins
Tay	New Tecumseth		Port Colborne	Toronto (North)
Thames Centre	Norfolk		Puslinch	Toronto (South)
Tiny	North Bay		Stratford	Toronto (West)
Wellington North	North Dumfries		Thorold	Wainfleet
West Perth	North Grenville		Vaughan	Whitby
Whitewater Region	Orillia		Waterloo	
	Penetanguishene		Welland	
	Quinte West		Whitchurch-Stouffville	
	Renfrew		Wilmot	
	Sarnia		Windsor	
	Saugeen Shores			
	South Bruce Peninsula			
	St. Thomas			
	Tillsonburg			
	Wellesley			
	West Grey			
	Woolwich			

BMA Study – Residential Tax Comparison

Saugeen Shores taxes rank as Low-Mid



Multi-Residential Comparisons - Summary

Multi-Residential				
Low	Low-Mid	Mid	Mid-High	High
Amherstburg	Brant	Aylmer	Barrie	Ajax
Aurora	Centre Wellington	Bracebridge	Brockville	Belleville
Essex	Orillia	Erin	Kingston	Clarington
Georgian Bluffs	Owen Sound	Fort Erie	Lincoln	Guelph
Gravenhurst	Pelham	Grimsby	London	Kitchener
Greenstone	Sault Ste. Marie	Guelph-Eramosa	North Bay	Middlesex Centre
Hanover	Timmins	Haldimand	Ottawa	Mississauga
Innisfil		Huntsville	Parry Sound	Niagara Falls
Kenora		Mapleton	Port Colborne	Oakville
Kincardine		Minto	Quinte West	Oshawa
King		North Dumfries	St. Thomas	Peterborough
Lakeshore		North Middlesex	Thorold	Pickering
Lambton Shores		Petawawa		Renfrew
Laurentian Valley		Port Hope		Scugog
Markham		Sarnia		St. Catharines
Meaford		Strathroy-Caradoc		Stratford
New Tecumseth		Thames Centre		Thunder Bay
Newmarket		Tillsonburg		Wainfleet
Norfolk		Wellesley		Waterloo
North Grenville		Wellington North		Wendell
North Perth		West Lincoln		Whitby
Penetanguishene		Wilmot		
Prince Edward County		Windsor		
Puslinch				
Richmond Hill				
Saugeen Shores				
South Bruce Peninsula				
Southgate				
Springwater				
The Blue Mountains				
Tiny				
Vaughan				
West Grey				
West Perth				
Whitchurch-Stouffville				
Whitewater Region				

BMA Study – Multi-Residential Tax Comparison

Saugeen Shores taxes rank as Low



Appendix C: List of Potential Operating Reductions

#	TITLE	COST	IMPACT
1. Services not Mandated			
1	Healthcare	\$150,000	The Town's ability to attract and retain physicians would be weakened, increasing the risk of gaps in primary care adding additional pressure on emergency services.
2	Recycling ICI's	\$180,000	Would reduce cost to \$20,000 but would no longer provide service to those ICI's that did receive curbside prior to Jan 1, 2026 shifting waste management burdens onto local employers and potentially increasing landfill use.
3	Housing Allowance	\$225,000	Discontinuing the Town's rent subsidy for 30 households participating in the County program directly impacts vulnerable residents, reducing support for affordable housing and making it more difficult for families to secure stable accommodation.
			Total: 2.2 %

2. Community Contributions / Operating Grants

4	Airport	\$30,140	Continue to provide grounds keeping, runway maintenance and building maintenance services and an annual operating grant to maintain Airport operations or consider its sale. Selling the airport would potentially limit local economic activity, emergency access and long-term transportation infrastructure options.
5	Rail Trail	\$22,653	Cutting the operating grant for the Rail Trail would force the Saugeen Rail Trail Association to halt annual programs and routine maintenance (including brochures, promotional materials, and tree maintenance) undermining a valued recreational asset that relies on Town funding for operations while memberships and donations are reserved for capital improvements.
6	Community Grant	\$25,000	No 2027 commitments exist – could be eliminated for a year
7	Art Society	\$50,000	Commitments have been made through 2027, to be approved annually. Would place staffing and exhibition programming at risk, weakening cultural offerings and community access to the arts.
8	Pumpkinfest	\$50,000	2026 One-time potential request intended to support onboarding of an executive director. The goal of the executive director is to build a sustainable financial plan that would permit Pumpkinfest to operate independent of Town funding long-term.
			Total: 0.3%

3. Absorbing Inflation 2027

9	Total Inflation	\$148,000	Keep budgeted expense lines for 2027 at 2026 levels. This would effectively reduce service capacity and erode the Town's ability to maintain current service levels as operating costs increase.
			Total: 0.6%

4. Operational Reduction to Expense Items of 1%

Office of the CAO - Operational Reduction to Expense Items of 1% - Target \$20,000

10	Flash Vote	\$12,000	Less public feedback on projects limits data-driven and responsive municipal decision-making.
11	Engage Platform	\$15,000	Eliminating a central source of clear project information reduces public engagement and increases resident frustration.
			Total: 0.2%

Community Services - Operational Reduction to Expense Items of 1% – Target \$89,000

12	Parks Horticultural Elimination	\$11,970	No beautification materials at parks, waterfront and downtowns. Beautification is shown to increase foot traffic to businesses and increase property values. Additional benefits of beautification include increasing a person's sense of well-being and supporting the mental health of residents.
13	Parks Trails Maintenance 50% Reduction	\$7,583	Saugeen Shores maintains 40 km of recreation trails. Maintenance costs represent \$190 per km, supporting active transportation, outdoor recreation, and access to natural heritage; cutting maintenance by 50% would increase safety risks and liability, force reactive maintenance, and raise the likelihood of trail closures.
14	Parks Wildlife Management Elimination	\$8,494	Through the wildlife management program focused on reducing the impacts of hyperabundant geese at the Port Elgin Harbour and Northshore Park, we have measured a reduction in the nuisance goose population. Eliminating this program would permit the return of an un-managed goose population, reducing enjoyment of the waterfront and risking water quality through increased bacterial presence in the water near shore.
15	Portable Washroom Elimination	\$31,297	Originally introduced during COVID-19, the seasonal and year-round portable washroom program continues to improve access to sanitation near beaches and the waterfront—especially outside peak season—with year-round units supporting winter recreation and responding to consistent resident requests for off-season washroom access

16	Waterfront Maintenance 50% Reduction	\$29,167	Reducing beach maintenance, grooming, including beach raking would reduce the service levels driven by the Council-approved beach maintenance plan used to manage costs and expectations, leading to increased resident and visitor dissatisfaction and inconsistent maintenance outcomes.
			Total: 0.4%

Corporate Services - Operational Reduction to Expense Items of 1% - Target \$54,000

17	Microsoft 365 Enterprise Reduction	\$13,000	Downgrading would limit advanced software capabilities across the organization, constraining productivity and collaboration for users who rely on those tools while delivering cost savings.
18	Volunteer Appreciation Reduction	\$2,500	Reducing the annual budget for volunteer appreciation would result in a smaller event and limit the Town's ability to meaningfully recognize community volunteers, potentially weakening volunteer engagement and retention.
19	Clerk Advertising Reduction	\$2,200	Limiting flexibility to advertise when needed, increasing the risk of reduced public awareness and engagement in statutory and municipal communications.
20	Heritage Committee Reduction	\$1,300	Reflects a modest adjustment based on historical spending but would limit the Committee's flexibility to support heritage initiatives and programming.
21	Eliminate Corporate Training	\$6,114	Removes access to online learning platforms, limiting staff growth, professional development, and the Town's capacity to build skills needed for effective and efficient service delivery.
22	Employee Recognition	\$1,500	Reduction to the recognition funding would impact events like Employee Recognition Day, Service Recognition, Staff BBQ which ultimately impact staff job satisfaction and retention.
23	Postage Reduction	\$5,000	Right-sizing services to reflect increased e-billing would generate efficiencies but may reduce flexibility for residents who continue to rely on traditional methods.
24	Fees & Charges Review Removed	\$13,300	Would make it more difficult to keep municipal fees aligned with market rates, increasing the risk of under-recovery of costs or inequitable fee structures over time.
25	Accounts Receivable Penalty	\$9,100	Penalty and Interest received on accounts. Adjustment based on actual (Revenue) budget increase.
			Total: 0.2%

Development Services - Operational Reduction to Expense Items of 1% - Target \$40,000

26	Policy Studies Funding Removal	\$20,000	Would limit the Town's ability to respond quickly to urgent issues, increasing delays and requiring additional time to seek Council approval for new funding or budget transfers.
27	Road Needs Assessment Reduction	\$5,000	Reduction to the Road Needs Assessment would limit capacity to ensure adequate planning to annually update the roads capital plan.
28	Sign Reflectivity Reduction	\$10,000	Reduction to Sign Reflectivity would limit the number of sign reflectivity tests that could be completed and delay improvements that support road safety and regulatory compliance.
29	Asset Management Plan Updates	\$5,000	Reduction to Asset Management Plan Updates would impact the quality of information used to prepare the 10-year capital plan.
			Total: 0.2%

Fire Services - Operational Reduction to Expense Items of 1% - Target \$17,000

30	Reduce Fire Equipment Maintenance	\$16,677	While the current condition of fire equipment could permit deferred maintenance, this approach increases the long-term repair and replacement costs.
			Total: 0.1%

Operations - Operational Reduction to Expense Items of 1% - Target \$57,000

31	Loose Top Maintenance	\$ 57,272	Scale back dust control coverage, application rates, and gravel use, resulting in a lower level of service on rural roads. Possible increased impacts to safety, road condition, and resident satisfaction.
			Total: 0.2%

5. Review of Staffing Positions / Moratorium on Hires in 2027

32	Hiring Delay	\$30,000 on Average	Would slow the Town's ability to scale services with population growth, increasing pressure on existing staff and reducing service responsiveness as demand continues to rise.
			Total: 0.1%

TITLE	Cost Impact	Service Impact
Part Time Aquatics Instructors AWC	\$47,712	Would advance if demand warrants. More instructors allow for more revenue opportunities. (revenue funded net zero)
Part Time Senior Lifeguard AWC	\$73,984	Limits the Town's ability to respond to growing demand, delaying revenue-generating programming that is designed to be cost-neutral and scalable as the demand increases. (revenue funded net zero)
Arborist	\$116,262	would delay the implementation of the tree bylaw, increase maintenance backlogs, and delay completion of an in-house GIS inventory, limiting the Town's ability to implement and manage the urban canopy impacts as population growth accelerates.
AMPS Officer	\$132,214	Limits the Town's ability to respond to increasing enforcement demands as the population grows. (revenue funded net zero).
By-Law – Tree Enforcement	\$110,477	Pending the outcome of the pilot program to contract out these services—would delay enforcement capacity and limit the Town's ability to manage tree protection.

6. Delay of Work Program

33	Concession 10 Stormwater Pond Enhancements	\$25,000 (2027)	Delaying the work will result in no maintenance or improvements, leaving the area in its current condition.
34	Waterfront Master Plan Update	\$50,000 (2029)	Delaying the Waterfront Master Plan Update means the plan will not reflect current conditions or community priorities, with updates deferred to a ten-year cycle.
35	Official Plan	\$150,000 in 2027 & 2032	Shifting Official Plan updates to a ten-year update cycle (currently five-year update cycle) increases the risk that the Plan becomes outdated relative to legislative requirements and Council priorities.
36	Zoning By-law	\$75,000 in 2028 \$ 80,000 in 2033	Extending updates to a ten-year cycle (currently five-year update cycle) increases the risk that the By-law becomes outdated relative to legislation and Council priorities, though this is partially mitigated through annual housekeeping updates.
37	Drainage Master Plan	\$ 200,000 in 2033	Minimal immediate impact as current update will not be approved until sometime in 2026, with the next update deferred to 2036
38	IT Strategic Plan every 10 years	\$50,000 in 2027	Eliminating this initiative risks leaving the Town behind as technology and service delivery expectations continue to evolve.
39	IT Security Audit every 3 years	\$30,000 in 2027 \$35,000 in 2030 \$38,000 in 2033	Extending the review cycle to five years increases the risk of a successful cyberattack and may negatively impact the Town's ability to secure affordable cyber insurance as technology rapidly evolves.
40	Official Record Scanning	\$20,000 annually 2027-2032	Reducing ongoing funding to \$10,000 annually will delay progress on making official documents available online.
41	Benefit Plan Review every 5 years	\$20,000 in 2027 and 2032	Extending reviews to a six-year cycle increases the risk that benefit adjustment impacts are larger between review periods.

42	Compensation Review every four years	\$36,000 in 2029 and 2033	Extending the review cycle from four to six years creates longer gaps between reviews, increasing the likelihood of larger adjustments and potential impacts on recruitment and retention.
43	HR Payroll System Enhancements	\$22,500 in 2027/8	Eliminating this initiative removes tools that would help staff manage workforce hours and earnings, reducing operational oversight and planning effectiveness.
44	Develop Power Business Intelligence (BI) reporting for internal and external facing reporting.	\$25,000 in both 2028 and 2029	Eliminating this funding prevents technological advancement in helping the public better review business plans, budgets, and variances.
45	Automations implemented processing	\$30,000 annually in 2027-2029	Reducing the funding to \$20,000, the funding is intended to enhance staff effectiveness in key areas, including Medical Building Billing, Pre-Authorized Payment Posting, and Developer Deposits.
46	Delay Cemetery Master Plan	\$100,000 in 2027	Delaying the Cemetery Master Plan perpetuates existing practices that have remained unchanged since amalgamation, leaving emerging issues such as diverse burial needs and resource optimization unaddressed.
			Total: 0.3%

7. Revenue Generating Opportunities

47	Increase User Fee Revenue	\$41,630 to \$83,263	Potential 5% to 10% increase to 2027 user fees for Ball Diamond, Soccer and Ice Rentals.
			Total: 0.2 - 0.4%

Revenue Item	2027 Forecasted Revenue	Additional 2027 Annual Revenue	Revised 2027 Forecasted Revenue
Diamond Rentals 5% Annual Increase	\$74,795	\$3,739	\$78,534
Diamond Rentals 10% Annual Increase	\$74,795	\$7,479	\$82,274
Soccer Rentals 5% Annual Increase	\$7,011	\$350	\$7,361
Soccer Rentals 10% Annual Increase	\$7,011	\$701	\$7,712
Ice Rentals 5% Annual Increase	\$750,839	\$37,541	\$788,380
Ice Rentals 10% Annual Increase	\$750,839	\$75,083	\$825,922