

Here's what councillors say about the upcoming budget



[Matthew Pearson, Ottawa Citizen](#)

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We sent a survey about the upcoming draft budget to city councillors. We asked them five questions. Here's how they responded.

1. Mayor Jim Watson is committed to a two per cent tax increase. Are you?
2. Did you campaign on a two per cent increase?
3. What are your budget priorities for your ward and the city?
4. Do you foresee pressures or cuts in the budget? What are your biggest concerns?
5. Did you think the budget process is working? (If not, explain)

Bob Monette, Orléans

1. Yes I am committed to two per cent or less.
 2. Yes, I campaigned on keeping the taxes as low as two per cent or less
 3. Infrastructure renewal and LRT to Trim Road.
 4. We have committed to finding savings through efficiencies and at this time I have no concerns reaching our goal.
 5. Yes, it is working as it should.
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Allan Hubley, Kanata South

1. Yes. I am committed to keeping taxes as low as we can without cutting core services.
 2. I did not campaign on a number. I promised to keep taxes low as possible and work to trim costs.
 3. I believe we need to do a serious review of our services, programs and standards to eliminate waste. Transportation and transit improvements top of my list.
 4. Yes. If we don't do a serious robust review and make the necessary adjustments we will take on unnecessary debt for our future. The public needs to be involved and informed during the process.
 5. Depends on the outcome. Certainly the right steps are included. Now we have to see what effort will be made to reflect what we are hearing. If we don't do a serious review then the consult was for show and I will be disappointed in the process.
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Scott Moffatt, Rideau-Goulbourn

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1. Yes.
 2. In the two per cent neighbourhood, yes.
 3. Funding for road renewal and continuing our commitment to increase our contribution to capital. City-wide, I think we need to focus on needs rather than wants. Last term, we achieved some success on that in divesting ourselves of the Nepean Equestrian facility and Pine View Golf Course. While those opportunities become fewer and further between, we still need to make an effort to reduce spending on items that are non-essential.
 4. In past budgets, we've found some success by reducing positions at the City through attrition. This needs to continue where possible. While it is unfortunate that Opera Lyra has announced they will cease operations, it does bring attention to the fact that the city provides them with \$220,500 in annual operating funding. Similarly, the Great Canadian Theatre Company receives \$384,061 in annual operating funds. La Nouvelle Scene has received over \$500,000.
 5. Yes.
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David Chernushenko, Capital

1. It is a good target, but I am not committed to it.
 2. No.
 3. Beyond the obvious goal of providing the best service possible within existing budgets, and even looking for saving/duplication, my spending priorities are: to shift the balance toward more active transportation and public transit, and away from the current roads/private vehicle priority; increase tree protection and forestry staffing levels; maintain or increase parks lifecycle funding.
 4. Yes, it is clear that a variety of wage/contract pressures, unforeseen expenses (weather, benefits awards, etc.) and ongoing inflation in some areas have created a large and growing budget pressure. This is particularly showing itself in some social services, sidewalk and park lifecycle maintenance, and a thousand little cuts/freezes.
 5. Yes, and no. Councillors and the public have plenty of opportunity to give early input and share our views. But we run up against the "two percent" promise and the general "don't raise my taxes" public sentiment, meaning nothing short of a group initiative by a majority of Council will actually increase the amount of money available through a larger tax increase. This might sell in some wards, but not likely in very many. Hence the "steady as she goes" process.
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Mark Taylor, Bay

1. No. I am committed to a rate of increase that is both responsible for the services residents want balanced with the ability of residents to pay. I am not dedicated to a specific number as an end point. As a starting point I voted to accept the mayor's motion that a draft be created at a two per cent increase with no service level reductions.

2. No. I campaigned on increases “around the rate of inflation” explaining this was in a one per cent to three per cent area.
 3. For the ward, adequate investment in renewing our older assets people rely on for services (pipes, roads, parks and playgrounds) as well as local economic development. For the city: Progress on the Light Rail Plan (both Stage 1&2), investments in social infrastructure to help end chronic homelessness and build an age-friendly city and further focus on growing our city-wide economy. I have many other items of concern, but these top the list.
 4. I also foresee the potential for an increase in pressure on our staff, which I am mindful of and have directed (at the finance and economic development committee) management staff to review this to ensure we assist our people in delivering work more efficiently. In other words, commit to finding creative ways to deliver services while supporting our already hard-working staff without compromising the one of the city’s greatest assets — its people.
 5. I do. We should continue to look for ways to engage more residents in the consultation process each year, but the input we get I see makes its way into the draft documents. I think giving senior management a reference point to start a draft at works more efficiently than past efforts where all the ‘needs+wants’ were summarized in a document that would bear an intolerable tax increase burden.
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Mathieu Fleury, Rideau-Vanier

1. I think that we need to ensure that tax increases are predictable and affordable, but also allow the city to continue to provide current service levels and explore new ways of delivering service. Our focus is to improve the service delivery for our community while understanding the financial impacts on residents (owners, renters, low income, families, seniors).
 2. I campaigned on maintaining tax increases that are affordable and predictable to our community. My biggest focus has been on maintaining the service levels and through engaging the community in those decisions.
 3. I would like to see the city provide a greater commitment to the ByWard Market, Montreal Road, active transportation, affordable housing (housing first: to reduce the chronically homeless population and offer a unit with the services that are needed to reduce homeless shelter stays) and removing interprovincial trucks downtown through the tunnel feasibility study.
 4. I am concerned that the city will need to reduce services to compensate for the budget pressures. Efficiencies are often hidden and not openly expressed through the budgeting discussions. For example: We only learned of the impact to bylaw services workforce after the last budget was approved. Those types of pressures need to be clearly identified in the budget process so that councillors can make open and transparent decisions.
 5. The city recently made important changes to the consultation process. We are now able to hear from residents before the budget draft is released and provide greater input earlier in the process. For our ward, we are in the second year of Budget Speak, a Citizens Academy moderated session that encourages discussion and allows for a participatory process. Also, we are in ongoing discussions with members and organizations from our community about their needs, which helps guide the broader discussion as well.
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Michael Qaqish, Gloucester-South Nepean

1. I am committed to keeping taxes as low as possible.
 2. I committed to keeping taxes as low as possible.
 3. Infrastructure investments in roads to accommodate the continued growth in Gloucester-South Nepean, extension of the O-Train to Riverside South, a recreational complex in Riverside South.
 4. I have highlighted my priorities with the city manager and mayor during our preliminary budget meetings. I don't believe we have a revenue problem. I believe there are many departments where more efficiencies can be found especially on the FTE front. I have been assured that senior management is tackling those this term. I intend to continue working with staff to find efficiencies across the city.
 5. I have an open channel of communication with my residents year round and not just when we host a budget consultation meeting. I believe the meetings that the mayor hosts with senior management and each councillor are a good time for us to present our vision and what we have heard from our constituents. I certainly take advantage of that opportunity.
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Catherine McKenney, Somerset

1. I am committed to holding the tax rate increase to the level required to maintain our existing services.
 2. No. I campaigned on 'good fiscal management while maintaining the services that are important to residents of Somerset ward.'
 3. Safe and comfortable pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, affordable housing, recreation space and programming, greenspace and trees, affordable transit, community services (i.e. day programs for those who are precariously housed), arts and culture, and childcare.
 4. My biggest concern is how we as a council will achieve \$47m in efficiencies over three years without significant service cuts.
 5. The process was changed to reflect some concerns after the 2015 budget. We held our budget consultations prior to the tabling of the budget so that we could hear from residents before the budget was developed.
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Keith Egli, Knoxdale-Merivale

1. I have to see the budget, but at this point I believe a 2 percent increase will work. This assumes that we keep a close eye on proposed savings and efficiencies. This is why I directed the city manager to put in place a process to monitor and report on these initiatives in a timely fashion.
2. I campaigned on taxes staying in the two percent range.
3. In the ward I would like to see some road renewal and also some emphasis on revitalizing parks. On a city wide basis I would welcome more police resources for traffic enforcement. Also I have proposed that staff consider some potential changes to how we do things to achieve savings. For example, to look at using green cover other than grass to minimize the need for

mowing and weed removal. I hope for a pilot to proceed in 2016. In a similar vein I have asked staff to consider the use of hydro seeding as opposed to sod placement after major infrastructure projects.

4. There will likely be some reorganizing of priorities and also some review of projects. I believe such reviews and discussions are healthy for an organization. Each department should be putting something on the table. I have tasked staff as chair of the transportation committee to consider how we might make snow removal more efficient for the 2015 – 2016 winter and provide a more extensive review of services going forward.

5. I do think the budget process is working. We recently changed it up somewhat to allow councillors to set up their own budget consultations. We have opportunities to meet with both senior staff and the mayor as part of the budget building process. If at the end of the day a councillor is dissatisfied with the tabled budget, there is a clearly defined process to change priorities or projects through advocacy at the budget debates.

George Darouze, Osgoode

1. Yes, I agreed with the mayor and the two per cent tax increase.

2. No, this was not a campaign issue in my ward.

3. I have three major budget priorities: resurfacing, traffic congestion and park improvements. As a rural ward with over 650 km of roads, my biggest budget priority is the resurfacing of roads in my ward. We have many roads that are in dire need and are crumbling away. We do not have public transit in our ward so roads are of vital importance. My second priority is the improvement of traffic congestion through intersection modifications and the paving of gravel roads (to help with east-west traffic movement). Finally, I believe that park improvements are important for our aging parks. The city does a great job at designing parks in new subdivision. We must keep in mind all of the aging equipment and facilities we currently have throughout the city.

4. A concern of mine is that we could be taking better care of our aging roads and infrastructure. We cannot stop time, our roads and infrastructure will continue to deteriorate, we just need to be mindful and set aside money to maintain and repair.

5. I felt that this year there was much more opportunity for residents to be involved in the budget process though public consultation and online avenues.

Jan Harder, Barrhaven

1. As you know, council set the tax target through our budget guideline report, so yes. It isn't up for debate.

2. Yes, protecting core services is important to our taxpayers. We need to do this with a balanced approach and consequently this necessitates an increase. This was the maximum.

3. The ward: South Nepean Collector – Sanitary sewer capacity, sure doesn't sound sexy but it is most important project and long overdue (Citigate/Costco/Employment Centre); four new growth parks (Havencrest, Leatherleaf, Mattino, Rivermist); Safer cycling, pedestrian

routes/connections along Greenbank and Strandherd; traffic safety investments; Design Work starts for Greenbank (Jockvale to Cambrian including new bridge) and Jockvale Road (Cambrian to Prince of Wales). The city: Infrastructure standards review/Building Better Smarter Suburbs, LRTstage 2 readiness, Employment Land Review – Economic Development investments/partnerships, Building Better Revitalized Neighbourhoods, Ottawa Central Library, 25 new Ottawa police officers, more work on Ottawa River Action Plan, continued investment in sanitary and water infrastructure.

4. Do you foresee pressures or cuts in the budget? What are your biggest concerns?

This year Council gave staff a three-year marching order. Staff will look internally for efficiencies. We need to do this before asking our taxpayers to pay more. As well, council needs to uphold our end by sticking to the plan, and this concerns me in that some colleagues may think now is the time to go rogue focusing on their particular ward by advancing projects. That's no plan and not affordable and totally unfair to the city at large.

5. We changed the budget process this year and it's not finished, so the question is clearly premature. If we find it hasn't worked well, we will have a look next year.

Tim Tierney, Beacon Hill-Cyrville

1. Keeping taxes low is important and two per cent is a good target.

2. I campaigned on keeping taxes low, no set rate. That being said, we have a provincial Municipal Property Assessment (MPAC) coming up in 2016, which will have the greatest impact on urban wards (like Beacon Hill-Cyrville) so any increases in taxes have implications.

3. Ward/City related priorities are roads/pathways(multi-use pathways), parks and seniors.

4. The job is not easy. If it was, we would just raise taxes. I will await the final numbers, but if tough decisions are required we will have to make them. Decisions like hiring freezes, car diets and eliminating discretionary spending will help ensure we achieve the mayors target of two per cent or less.

5. Yes, but public consultation is always the best way to gauge what residents consider priority. Over the past years (2010-2014) having regional (Center, East, West, South) meetings have brought small numbers of people. This year we went to the people. In the east, we went to the shopping center allowing us to hear different views. Last council meeting, I inquired about the use of online tools to find out what is of greatest importance is to individuals. (please see www.edmontonbudget.com). Tools like this allow people to increase or decrease levels of spending in departments based on their home value.

Diane Deans, Gloucester-Southgate

1. I am committed to keeping taxes as low as possible while continuing to deliver the quality services that our residents need and want.

2. I campaigned on the promise embedded in my answer to question one.

3. The ward: Resurfacing the Greenboro Pathway system and building a community kitchen in the Albion-Heatherington Community are my key priorities.

The city: Ensuring that council is not reducing services and supports to our vulnerable citizens and children and youth. That includes social services, housing, recreation, child care and transit fares

4. I do not foresee major cuts in the 2016 budget. As part of the budget direction the city will be using one time funding, efficiencies and revenues to cover our deficit and will leave much of the heavy lifting to be done in the 2017 and 2018 budgets. I am concerned about running deficits and/or balancing budgets with unsupported efficiency targets.

5. I believe that council needs to return to the time when citizens and councillors had more direct input the budget.

Jean Cloutier, Alta Vista

1. Yes, I support a modest increase based on inflation.

2. No, I did not. I campaigned on fiscal responsibility, which I don't believe is tied to a particular number.

3. What I'm looking for in this year's budget for Alta Vista and the city as a whole is funding for park infrastructure renewal, such as play structures and field houses, and I want to ensure continued tree planting within neighbourhoods and green spaces. I want to ensure the budget prioritizes road safety through the form of traffic calming initiatives for vehicular traffic, and infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians. This will be complemented by the Confederation Line, and moving forward with Phase 2 of LRT. Culture and celebration is also an important part of city life, and I support funding for the Ottawa 2017 initiative, so we can plan events worthy of Canada's 150th.

4. Yes, there will certainly be pressures across all city departments, and I want to ensure they operate efficiently. We need realistic maintenance plans for our infrastructure, such as roads, sidewalks, sewers. I'm mindful of the long term health of the city's finances and debt levels; we have some strategies in place and I plan to monitor their effectiveness.

5. As a new councillor, last year's budget process felt rushed due to the municipal election. This year, we've been able to start the public consultation process quite early. I'm finding the community feedback very valuable, and continue to share it with city management. I look forward to the next steps of the budget process.

Eli El-Chantiry, West Carleton-March

1. Yes, so long as residents continue to receive the services they require

2. I campaigned on keeping taxes as low as possible while maintaining services for residents

3. Infrastructure/roads is always at the top of my list of priorities.

4. My biggest concern is the city's infrastructure and conditions of our roads.
 5. Yes, I believe it's working.
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Tobi Nussbaum, Rideau-Rockliffe

1. Raising property taxes should be a last resort. We need to go after efficiencies in government first. If the consequence of a target tax rate would result in cuts to services, we need to make sure citizens are aware of the impacts and have conversation with them about those tradeoffs. During the Budget Speak consultation I held, most of the participants told me they value city services and would not support cuts to them.

There is strong evidence that growth is not paying for growth, which ends up putting pressure on the tax base. We need to be looking at those structural elements as well.

2. While I didn't campaign on a two per cent tax increase, I do feel an obligation to try and keep tax increases as low as possible while maintaining the services residents want and expect.

3. Transit is critical. Sixty-one per cent of people at the Budget Speak session indicated they would prefer additional revenue be generated by the tax base rather than fare increases to mitigate transit budget pressures.

We also need to ensure we are investing in safe transportation choice. Whatever mode you take, walking, cycling or taking public transit is a public good that benefits all of us by reducing the number of cars on the road, thereby easing congestion, reducing costly wear and tear on our road infrastructure and mitigating pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

Residents in my ward articulated a preference for the city to be a robust and efficient provider of services.

4. Given the financial state of transit services, there will be pressure on transit fares. Riders should not bear the burden of the increased fares at the same time they are experiencing service disruptions during construction of our much-needed light-rail system. Instead, we need to find savings and look to the tax base to cover the gap in revenue until the LRT comes online in 2018, when we will see a sharp drop in operating costs.

5. We're making progress. I worked with my urban council colleagues to pilot an innovative and interactive format for budget consultations in 2015 and I'm happy the city took up that concept and applied it more broadly for this year's budget.

Steps have been taken to improve the timing of the consultations. That outreach now happens before the tabling of the draft budget, which is something that came out of the review Coun.

Brockington and I asked for after the 2015 budget.

What I continue to hear from residents is the need for budget information in more digestible, relatable format that allow them to contribute in a more meaningful way to the budget process.

This is improving, but there is more work to be done to make the process engaging and inclusive.

Marianne Wilkinson, Kanata North

1. No. To get to a two per cent tax increase the budget has to be kept to a 1.5 per cent increase due to rules impacting how much can be charged to businesses. Together with any increase in

total assessment from new buildings, it is insufficient to pay for increases in base costs, so means reductions in services.

2. No. I did not specify any specific increase. I prefer to look at needs, look at what can be done to increase efficiencies or change how services are provided and then provide the resources to meet the resulting requirements.

3. There are safety issues that need to be addressed, e.g. the Huntmar bridge over the 417 is closed to pedestrians, so there is no way to cross to jobs at the Tanger Outlet Mall or to go to Canadian Tire Centre either by foot or to do so safely on bicycles. People still cross as they have no other choice. Major safety issues like that need to be addressed. We also need to look after lands we own – the hydro corridor through Morgan’s Grant is city-owned land, but staff say they don’t have a budget to even cut the weeds (including loads of poison parsnip) except for a three-foot strip along the pathway there. Maintenance of parks, roads, sidewalks and pathways needs to be improved. Issues along Campeau Drive where pedestrians and cyclists interconnect needs addressing as soon as possible (it is one of the council priorities).

4. To keep present services requires cuts. Attention to staffing levels is one way to reduce costs as there are too many levels now — we need to let staff make decisions without having multi levels of approvals.

5. It works as a means of keeping taxes low, but fails in showing the long term impacts of failure to do enough maintenance. It is hard to understand and lacks the descriptive detail to really know what each department does and why they need the staff level and other resources that are just shown on single budget lines.

Riley Brockington, River

1. I’m committed to a two per cent increase, if needed. Tax increases should be a last resort after all spending needs are justified first.

2. No. I indicated that realistic tax rates and controlling spending was one of my main priorities but I was silent on specifying a rate.

3. Mooney’s Bay pavilion overhaul, renos; Alexander CC overhaul, renos; park upgrades, improvements; public works improvements, sidewalks, guardrail, lighting, stop signs, traffic lights, traffic speed enforcement; reinstate partial service for OC TRanspo Route 3; greater focus and presence by OPS needed. We need public works staff to implement traffic calming initiatives. Councillors have money, but not enough public works staff to get it done.

4. Reserves being depleted, debt too high, backlog in parks and rec/road projects.

Biggest concern? That Council isn’t fully aware of the full extent of the various risks

5. Improvements are needed on an on- going basis. After every budget cycle, council should be polled and asked for suggestions. I moved a motion following the last cycle that resulted in positive changes being approved.

Shad Qadri, Stittsville-Kanata West

1. Yes.
 2. Yes.
 3. Infrastructure and transit improvements keeping up with the growing needs of the community.
 4. I do see pressures on the budget, but instead of cuts I look forward to finding efficiencies in order to balance the budget.
 5. Yes. This budget process is working. It has proven so by being maintained over the last two terms. This budget process is working. It has proven so by being maintained over the last two terms.
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Jeff Leiper, Kitchissippi

1. I am not committed to a two per cent increase. Keeping tax increases to the rate of consumer inflation is obviously highly desirable, but needs to be weighed against residents' demands for maintained services. This will be a challenge.
 2. I campaigned on a platform of keeping tax increases low, using the rate of inflation as a yardstick.
 3. In the face of serious budget pressures, my priority is to maintain services and to ensure that the costs of providing those are distributed fairly.
 4. As established during our budget directions discussion at council recently, inflationary pressures on the city are significantly higher than two per cent. I am concerned that maintenance of our services will not be possible if taxes aren't raised to the necessary level at some point. Offloading budget pressures from the tax base to user fees — for example, recreation and transit — is a particular concern to me.
 5. A key direction to staff this year is to explain fully and transparently what efficiencies are proposed, and the impact of any other funding changes, particularly in the operating budget that is particularly opaque to the public. I trust that this direction will be fully met, and that we will be in a position to have a rich discussion about the impact of any changes to funding and the public interest implications.
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Stephen Blais, Cumberland

1. Yes.
2. I campaigned on maintaining Ottawa as an affordable city.
3. Nearly half of all urban expansion lands are within Cumberland Ward and as such, we'll need to plan appropriately to ensure investments in infrastructure and services keep pace with this astronomical growth. Therefore, my priorities are continuous investment in reducing commute times and improving recreational opportunities.
Taxpayers require sustainable investments in roads and transit in order to travel to and from work. The expansion of existing recreational facilities and the planning for new ones to ensure our growing community as access.

Further, investments in multi-use pathways that can be used for both transportation and recreation must continue so that Orléans and Cumberland become better connected internally. Investment in renewal is required, especially in rural Cumberland, to ensure all of our systems continue to work: roads, water, streams, forest management.

4. Yes. As we strive to make the city more efficient, there will undoubtedly be changes to how services are delivered. We must continually evaluate if the services offered continue to be relevant and if new services are warranted. As society changes and evolves so too must government. When governments fail to adjust to new realities, taxpayer money is simply wasted and necessary investments are either underfunded or ignored.

5. Yes. As of today, I have not seen nor heard of a compelling reason how it's not working.

Jody Mitic, Innes

1. Yes, I am committed to holding this year's tax rate increase to 2% citywide. I believe it will allow the city to meet its basic needs, while at the same time respecting the budget of families across the city. It is important that our budget responds to the growing costs of running a city, but as councillor for Innes Ward my job is to make sure the quality of city services for my residents remains high.

2. During the election campaign voters told me they wanted to see more investment in roads and community facilities. I campaigned on a modest increase that responds to increasing costs, but I have made it clear throughout the budget process that I am focused on getting real results for Innes Ward residents first and foremost.

3. Ward priorities: Redevelopment of the Blackburn Arena and expansion of the Community Hall; construction of the Brian Coburn Extension to Renaud Road; increased investment in traffic calming measures to make neighborhoods safer; more money for road improvements and maintenance.

Citywide Priorities: Completion of Phase 1 LRT and commencement of Phase 2 LRT to Orléans; improvements to city roads and recreational facilities; barrier-free access throughout the city for persons with disabilities.

4. There are always pressures to cut the budget. As councillors it is our responsibility to develop a budget that protects city services and is ultimately fair to the residents who pay the bills. I am concerned that if budget cuts were to go too far, progress could stall on planned improvements to the physical infrastructure of Innes Ward. It is also important that we properly budget for the maintenance of current city infrastructure.

5. The city recently changed the way it consults with residents on the budget. Councillors were encouraged to host local budget consultation sessions in their communities. I was happy to host a joint budget consultation with my fellow east end councillors this year at Place D'Orléans. I appreciated the feedback and advice residents provided to me and I look forward to bringing their ideas to the council table.

Rick Chiarelli, College

1. I support the number that will protect our core services while producing the lowest long-term cost to taxpayers. The tax number in one year is simply not a comprehensive way to characterize the budget. It is just one corner in the fiscal picture of the city. There are other elements like debt, outside revenue, value of sellable assets, unfunded incoming liabilities (including debt) and charges, unfunded costs of unavoidable repairs, depreciation of city assets etc. Anybody can produce a specific tax rate in any one specific year by accounting measures and false economies, but if unsound, there is always a more severe longer term cost. We need a tax rate that protects core service at the long-term lowest cost. I don't want to save \$20 this year if it means I will pay an extra \$100 two years from now. So is that number two per cent? We won't know until we see the books and the impact of possible options and what we would be buying with the two per cent. Having said that, our budget process virtually guarantees two per cent, regardless of the impact on the other elements of the budget or our future.

2. No. I had a longer term general target: "I want to hold the line on taxes, keeping them below inflation..." but there was a second part to that statement: "...at the same time maintaining value in basic core services." (Ottawa Citizen). So, while I have always said we need to gravitate toward the rate of inflation and did that every year I was a councillor in the former city of Nepean, the equal FINANCIAL impact on residents is the funding of basic core services and maintenance of infrastructure, parks etc. Why? So that "During the long term, impact appreciates the need of staying below inflation" (Campaign circular 2014). We can only get to long term taxes below inflation by both a) properly funding core services and b) following an asset management program that does the maintenance and lifecycle that spares taxpayers from avoidable high costs in the future – something we have been underfunding by a significant percentage. I will not trade a tax reduction of half a percent this year for a two or three percent hike next year or another future year. But I will support a final deal on the budget that supports strategies that produce the lowest long-term cost to taxpayers and move us toward inflation level increase for the long term.

3. Investments in repair, maintenance and lifecycle on parks and infrastructure (eg reconstruction of the condemned Creatview pool and park, Doug Frobel Park and Briargreen lifecycle). We are currently only investing a fraction of what our dedicated public service and outside accountants advise is the optimum level of investment in repair, maintenance and lifecycle replacement to achieve the mid and long range lowest cost to taxpayers. Failure to invest enough in these elements of the budget are false savings. The same attitude that says "I can save \$40 by skipping the oil change for my car" leads to under-spending on repair, maintenance and lifecycle. Every dollar we evade spending on these things can create a bill of 10-50 times that amount in avoidable future costs when, instead, we have to reconstruct the asset.

4. No matter how you spin it, we implemented a budget last year that cost five per cent but we only taxed two per cent for it. That produced one of the biggest deficits in the city's history. Provincial law prevents the city from simply rolling that into our accumulated debt (which now stands at more than double what it was just five years ago). Instead, whatever the year's deficit stands at as of the date of budget deliberations must become the first thing paid back with next year's budget. Whether it be \$52 million or \$30+ million, that is two per cent- to four per cent worth of tax increases that we face as a pressure. And there are always other pressures. It has

been mused that we enjoy a 1.3 per cent growth in assessment from 2015 and that this “found money” should help. However, growth in assessment has a net COST. It is not a net gain. That means that for every dollar of growth in assessment, the increased cost of providing service to that growth is MORE than that \$1 of new revenue. Finally, rail. Even though we have only paid a part of the City’s share of Light Rail Stage 1, the City’s budget is like a tight collar turning the face purple. We still have to pay the bulk of Stage 1 and then we will have to pay our whole cost of Stage 2. So yes, there are pressures. The temptation might be to make “cuts” and produce “savings” that just make no long-term sense. Or, there could be temptation to cut core services. Both are penny wise and pound foolish. But I don’t know. I

My biggest biggest concerns? False economies.

5. Things are a little better this year because the budget process allowed us to seek input from the community before the draft budget (and virtually final) budget was written. Assuming that input was respected, it is a good thing. However, clearly council was hit with too many “surprises” stemming from last year’s budget. Council needs to demand more comprehensive information in advance so we know the risks associated with various budget lines. Whether it be by demanding more respect to the Auditor General’s recommendations dating back as far as 2007 to ensure regular sensitive labour relations updates are provided to Council, or if it be by demanding better data about the cost of snow clearing in years with less than average snow falls, it is our responsibility to expect more as a function of our duty to conduct proper oversight.