

TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING ON FEBRUARY 19, 2015
FROM:	LARRY PALARCHIO DIRECTOR, FINANCIAL PLANNING AND POLICY
SUBJECT:	2015 BUDGET – PUBLIC INPUT

RECOMMENDATIONS

That, on the recommendation of the Director, Financial Planning and Policy, this report **BE RECEIVED** for information.

BACKGROUND

This report captures public input and feedback on the 2015 Budget from **January 20, 2015 to February 18, 2015**. This report is in addition to a previous SPPC report on Public input for the 2015 Budget submitted on January 22, 2015.

This report includes input and feedback received through the following channels:

- www.buildabudget.ca;
- E-mails sent to budget@london.ca and phone calls made to at 519-661-4638;
- Twitter – tweets sent to @CityofLdnOnt or #ldnbudget15, and Facebook posts on the City of London Facebook page;

‘Build a Budget’ Interactive on-line tool (www.buildabudget.ca):

As a reminder for members of SPPC, for the third year in a row, Civic Administration has used www.buildabudget.ca as a platform for budget engagement. This website provides Londoners with a unique opportunity to learn about the 2015 Budget and the way monies are received and distributed in our municipality. It also provides residents with sincere input points on items and services that are relevant to the decisions Council will be deliberating throughout the budget process.

While providing input to this site, Londoners are able to see the financial impact of each one of their decisions on the overall property tax levy which can be displayed in cost/day, cost/month, and cost/year.

With a new term of Council and the subsequent development of a new Strategic Plan, this website is also being used to obtain feedback, via survey questions, on future taxation and service levels. The questions being used mirror that of the Environics (completed in 2012) survey so comparable data will be available in the future.

From January 20 2015 to February 18, 2015, www.buildabudget.ca has had **296 visits, resulting in 1,314 actions (clicks)**. Using these totals in combination with first SPPC report (January 22, 2015), www.buildabudget.ca has had **1,603 visits, resulting in 7,003 actions (clicks)** for 2015. This is well over a thousand more individuals than who used tool throughout the 2014 Budget process.

Public input gathered from www.buildabudget.ca is **attached** as **Appendix A**.

Other Feedback

As noted above, Civic Administration has been capturing feedback and comments related to the 2015 Budget through a variety of channels. E-mail inquiries and input were received through budget@london.ca and social media input was collected through Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/LondonCanada> and Twitter at @CityofLdnOnt or #LdnBudget15.

During the time period of January 20, 2015- February 18, 2015, there was **336 Tweets generating 992,593 impressions**. Combining these totals with that of the first SPPC report on this topic (January 22, 2015), there has been **1021 Tweets and 3,096,289 impressions**.

Appendix B (attached) captures feedback received through these channels

Prepared By:	Recommended By:
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APPENDIX A

FEEDBACK CAPTURED ON WWW.BUILDABUDGET.CA

Instructions: you can click on the “thumbs up”/“thumbs down” for each service area and this will indicate to Council where the public feels some numbers are too high or too low.	
CULTURE	
Centennial Hall	54 votes – 50% split
Arts, Culture & Heritage Advisory & Funding	37 votes – 54% vote increase
Museum London	33 votes – 61% vote decrease
Eldon House	31 votes – 68% vote decrease
Heritage	33 votes – 64% vote increase
London Public Library	38 votes – 68% vote increase
ECONOMIC PROSPERITY	
Business Attraction & Retention	31 votes – 74% vote increase
Community Improvement/BIA	30 votes – 87% vote increase
London Convention Centre	29 votes – 62% vote increase
Tourism London	30 votes – 53% vote increase
Covent Garden Market	33 votes – 73% vote increase
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES	
Conservation Authorities	27 votes – 78% vote increase
Environmental Programs	27 votes – 74% vote increase
Garbage, Recycling & Composting	28 votes – 71% vote increase
PARKS, RECREATION & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES	
Neighbourhood & Recreation	26 votes – 81% vote increase
Parks & Urban Forestry	28 votes – 79% vote increase
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES	
Building Approvals	27 votes – 59% vote increase
City Planning & Research (Land Use Planning)	25 votes – 56% vote increase
Development Services	26 votes – 65% vote increase
PROTECTIVE SERVICES	
Animal Services	28 votes – 69% vote increase
By law Enforcement & Property Standards	27 votes – 63% vote increase
Corporate Security & Emergency Management	23 votes – 70% vote increase
Fire Services	37 votes – 54% vote increase
London Police Services	35 votes – 63% vote increase
SOCIAL & HEALTH SERVICES	
Social Housing	31 votes – 58% vote increase
London & Middlesex Housing Corporation	27 votes – 52% vote decrease
Long Term Care	28 votes – 79% vote increase
Land Ambulance	28 votes – 89% vote increase
Middlesex London Health Unit	27 votes – 81% vote increase
Social & Community Support Services	28 votes – 71% vote increase
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES	
Parking	25 votes – 52% vote decrease
Public Transit (LTC)	28 votes – 71% vote increase
Roadways	35 votes – 77% vote increase
CORPORATE, OPERATIONAL & COUNCIL SERVICES	
Corporate Services	27 votes – 70% vote decrease
Corporate Planning & Corporate Administration	24 votes – 54% vote decrease
Council Services	24 votes – 54% vote decrease
Financial Management	24 votes – 54% vote decrease
Public Support Services	29 votes – 69% vote increase

Instructions: <i>are you willing to support an additional property tax levy increase to support any of the below additional investments?</i>	
Infrastructure Gap - Contribution to Capital Infrastructure Reserve Fund	24 votes – 75% YES
Central Library Revitalization Plan	27 votes – 55% NO
London Convention Centre - Reconfiguration of the Main Level	29 votes – 66% NO
Corporate Properties - Carrying Costs	25 votes – 52% NO
Municipal Grant Requests (Strategic Funding Framework) Not Recommended	27 votes – 66% NO

SURVEY QUESTIONS ON FUTURE (for strategic plan and multi-year budget development):

<i>Q1: What, in your opinion, is the single most important local problem facing London today?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unemployment, particularly the lack of opportunities available to young professionals. While London houses two academic institutions that provide quality education and training, the vast majority of graduates have no choice but to leave London to find employment that matches their education and skills. This is a shame considering London is a great city to live in.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Transit and Traffic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What it will become, a city of sprawl with no vibrant core or an exciting city within and without with easy access to both.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unemployment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> London has a really bad public transit problem. When people visit London they complain about how bad our bus system is vs other towns. Buses are constantly running off schedule. Sometimes by as much as an hour. Then when it finally arrives it's too full. In cold weather it is dangerous to make people wait up to 2 hours to board a bus especially if they are elderly. They also have zero accountability despite numerous complaints by residents. Bus drivers are highly inappropriate. A few days ago my boyfriend was on a bus and the passengers were not cooperating to squeeze themselves into a tiny area. The driver became frustrated and was screaming for everyone to get off. This is not the first incident. People have to get to work and school on time. Poor transit slows down progress and gives us a terrible image. It affects people EVERY day.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public transit.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need for increased diversified business attraction. Growing our business base will increase the amount of revenue brought in to the city and will attract more jobs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business and talent attraction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transportation, Moving product and people is very difficult and inconvenient in London
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I think the low employment rate is the most important problem facing Londoners - particularly among youth who are new graduates. Lack of employment = poorer quality of life. Our youth will start looking elsewhere to begin their careers and establish families. There needs to be more programs to support recent graduates and ultimately keep the talent in London.

Q2: What, in your opinion, would you say are the most appealing things about London?

- When comparing London to other mid-size cities in Ontario, the transportation system in London is appalling. There is a major congestion problem on the City's arterial roads and the transit system is not reliable enough to encourage Londoners to stop driving to commute to and from work.
- The Trees and park system
- London is a comfortable city to live in, work in and bring up a family. Situated on a river, it is a pretty midsize city, with a beautiful university, great parkland and affordable housing. It has (and hopefully will continue to have) all the cultural offerings of a larger city without the problems, (such as high crime rate, snarling traffic tie-ups and overpriced parking). It is close to two Great Lakes and is nestled amid the richest farmland in the country so organic and locally grown fruit and vegetables are just minutes away.
- The variety of natural areas, especially Environmentally Significant Areas, and the Thames River.
- Nice people. Nice downtown. Lots of shopping. Lots of good organizations like Connect for Mental Health.
- Pathways along the river.
Downtown dining.
Unique niches--Wortley, Byron, Old East Village
- Clean & relatively safe family oriented city.
- Public Safety and priority on forestation.
- Parks, culture, and built heritage
- London has great secondary and post-secondary schools and the hospitals are great.
- London has a culturally rich and historically significant community. Culture and heritage is what gives London its character. We need to start investing in our "charming" buildings that add character and aesthetic to our streetscapes and can also have economic impact. London is also a great city to raise a family - perfect size with all the resources.

Q3: What, in your opinion, is the most important thing that your municipal government does for you?

- The provision of essential daily services.
- Keeps the roads in good condition, although this has been greatly lacking
- Municipal government makes all the difficult decisions involved in maintaining and operating our city on a day to day basis from basic needs like sewage, water, garbage and snow removal but most importantly it should address our future needs and help to determine what type of city we will become. It's most important function will be to give Londoners a voice to determine that we do not grow in a sprawl of unplanned commercial opportunism but in a carefully crafted city that draws people in like a magnet by its culture, charm and respect for the environment that surrounds it and interconnects with it.
- Maintain infrastructure
- Creates economic opportunity and financial stability to infrastructure
- Provide services and infrastructure.
- Provides clean drinking water
- Water utilities.

Q4: *Local governments must balance the cost of delivering services with taxation. Which of the following options would you most prefer in London*

• Increase taxes to expand or improve services	48 votes
• Increase taxes to maintain services	7 votes
• Cut existing services to reduce taxes	5 votes
• Cut existing services to maintain taxes	5 votes

Q5: *Considering the list of services offered by your municipal government, is there any areas you feel are not essential?*

• Sports, let the private corporations sponsor sports, not the city unless it is a large event drawing in people for tourism
• I honestly could not say unless I was able to read the entire list of services provided by the municipality

APPENDIX B

FEEDBACK CAPTURED VIA TWITTER, FACEBOOK, EMAIL, AND PHONE

Emails sent to budget@london.ca during the time period of **January 20, 2015 – February 18, 2015**. This only includes feedback and/or statements, as all questions answered by finance staff have been removed.

- video what is a city budget
- The content was very good. Have you given any thoughts to showing this to immigrants? The voice over would need to be a bit slower. This would be for the 2016 budget year. Perhaps something that can be coordinated through the Local Immigration Partnership? You may contact me if you wish.
- For water. Both what I use, and toilet/laundry. I am cut to the minimal, yet you have increased my costs. Again maybe only a few bucks more than last year...but \$70/month in total. + +++ maintenance, Since you lost your major tax paying manufacturers, I have to suffer? It's no wonder we can't keep business here. I would complain to Stephan Turner, but it's useless. He can't do anything. When are my hydro rates going up? govt needs to talk with OPG, Liberals and other concerned. My main question is a detailed, why?
- I do not support spending any money on this project. When I worked downtown, on a daily basis, I saw drugs being sold in the open, people smoking pot in the open, fights on city buses, and, tons of garbage. I was afraid to even walk down there. The homeless and underprivileged will only continue to increase with provincial cutbacks, so, downtown will be like a magnet. The one time I had to park downtown, the parking lot was covered in broken window glass from cars being broken into. Spend my tax money on roads, green space, etc., where everyone benefits. Keep the tax increase to the rate of inflation, as Mr. Brown promised...2 percent...not 2.9 or 2.5. Police and fire wages/benefits have not even been considered yet.
- We very much admire your **Build a Budget** program, and the way you have presented your Budget information, what an exciting time to launch your program! Many from our Leadership team have looked to your city, London - as a benchmark for *'doing it right!'* We are excited to have just launched our new website last week, and we are now moving towards our next major initiative, creating new opportunities for citizens to engage in the budget process, educating, and stimulating interest in the understanding of budget basics, building confidence and trust in how the City invests tax dollars... Might you be able to share any of your communications planning around your **Build a Budget** program with us? I see that your *How Property Tax is Calculated* video was originally produced for Niagara Region, and that London has given credit. We are wondering if there might be a **possibility for some sort of an agreement regarding the use of your Budget Basics video**, that it might provide us a framework that we could edit?
- Pillar ought not get any more taxpayers money. Don't just kick projects down the road but actually make permanent cuts to the budget. The staff have recommended you don't give money to a variety of groups. What is the point of paying staff if you aren't going to listen to them?
- I would like to recommend that no separate ethnic group receive tax dollars. These types of organizations do not encourage assimilation into our society. Monies used for all-inclusive events would help to ensure that everyone is treated equally, and, encourage acceptance of London's values and laws.

Private money and donations should be used for any new performing arts centre, not, taxpayer money. A recent Free Press survey showed that less than 20 percent of respondents had attended any type of activity in this area.

London's unemployment rate is still high. A lot of taxpayers are on fixed incomes and will definitely feel the impact of any rate increase. 2.9 percent does not include police or fire...with the average London yearly income of \$48,000, how are we going to afford paying wages and benefits double that of the average wage earner?

- Budgets overall are easy to work on but the biggest obstacle is fear. Most all in the city are afraid to say no. We keep hearing threats of if we do not throw them all the money they want we will get a cut in service. We still get cuts in service even when they get more in their department. We hear the nonsense that in other municipalities they are making x dollars. House prices are different in every municipality so if a house in London on average is 10% less than Cambridge then all our city/Fire/Police etc. should be paid 10% less than their counterparts in Cambridge. I keep hearing that a certain percentage, a high one 90-95%, of department budgets are wages. Let's use Police for example. If the membership decides they want to go for a raise and it is either granted through approval or arbitration then the increase is the fault of the membership for wanting that raise and that would cause the budget request to rise. The request for a budget increase in all logic should be denied as it is caused by the membership and then they should pay the cost of the increase not taxpayers. If it involves laying off do be it but then it needs to be told to all citizens the real reason. The membership wanted more money in a raise and the money is not there so the layoff are 100% of the membership. This can go to all departments. As we all know there is s lineup for every Police/Fire/city worker DJ there is no need to give those raises. We also need to stop paying people who manage our departments or work for tax dollars that live outside London. From what I understand the City Manager and LTC manager do not like London enough to live in it. They should be paid 25% less if they live outside the City. There is also a myth that you have to pay more to get better people. I have never seen proof. I saw in today's paper groups wanting money. Most all were ridiculous requests. If the group's members felt their group was needed, useful and important then they could find the money private. Saying yes to the special interest groups is nonsense. Taking money from what will benefit the majority to please a minority group of people only hurts the city. Again learn to say no. I am curious how councillors and city department manage their personal hone budgets. Also stop blaming the previous council. You knew what you were getting in when you ran.

*All Tweets using @CityofLdnOnt or #LdnBudget15 during the time period of **January 20, 2015-February 18, 2015** shown below. All re-tweets, favourites, and/or questions have been removed.*

336 Tweets generating 992,593 impressions @CityofLdnOnt #ldnbudget15

- The @CityofLdnOnt #SPPC meeting is scheduled to start in 2 minutes. Watch the livestream: <http://t.co/vkliTR3LyU> #politics #ldnbudget15
- Public Participation on #ldnbudget15 is about to start. Come on down or watch live at <https://t.co/mynL9tOaXO>
- Great presentation from David, Board Chair @PillarNN abt the Social Innovation Shared Space #SISSldn #LdnOnt #ldnbudget15 #Impact #Community
- London Optimist Sports Centre up now talking about BMO ask. #ldnbudget15
- @atthePalace did a great job presenting and answering questions #ldnbudget15
- Great Job Nature London speaking at #ldnbudget15 on importance of better mgmt for Envl Significant Areas and our Urban Forest.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wow. Another great public speak at #ldnbudget15 on shifting some roads \$ to cycling infrastructure. Love engaged
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smallest #ldnbudget15 allocation: #Heritage - 0.72 of avg \$2565 #LdnOnt tax bill! @HeritageCouncil http://t.co/xrM0FQ76IC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thanks to all who spoke, came out, watched, tweeted, emailed, and phoned about #ldnbudget15. We're listening, keep 'em coming!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local groups looking to fit in London's budget process http://t.co/EucvqZvwuM @rfldn @EmergingLondon #LdnBudget15 #LdnOnt
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No better way to spend a Friday night! Discussing the future of our city. #ldnbudget15 #ldnstratplan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My #1 would be funding a program that keeps families in their homes. #ldnbudget15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you name 90 services? I can't. City needs to do a better job promoting the economic and social benefits of funded se...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's super easy to contact City Council #ldnbudget15 #ldnont Let them know your thoughts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief request to City Council-if supporting any, support Urban Forest Management Strategy #ldnbudget15 http://t.co/J3fvInyyQm
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • @CityofLdnOnt: Watch this video to learn how your city budget works. http://t.co/6iOjZLhUvn #ldnbudget15 #ldnont
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • @LdnCC is requesting Council support a loan to renovate the 1st floor during the #LdnBudget15 process. Loan has 0% impact on taxes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should @londonlibrary replace escalators with stairs that are healthier and less expensive to maintain? #LdnOnt #ldnbudget15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council tweaks Industrial Land Development Strategy timeline: http://t.co/c8NllggfPS #LdnOnt #politics #ldnbudget15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small police budget, but wages not included. http://t.co/gbbCS0Cilu ... @CityofLdnOnt #LdnBudget15 #LdnOnt
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$500K cut fails 13-1. Concerns raised that across the board cuts do not fully take detailed impacts into account. #ldnbudget15 #ldnont
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllrs debating \$1M one time draw from London Hydro to help ease tax increase currently at 2.5% or \$62 on avg home. #ldnbudget15 #ldnont
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need to plant more trees in east #ldnont I believe we have the least in London. #ldnbudget15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban Forest Strategy decision sees draft property tax increase rise slightly to \$63 dollars on avg home. #ldnont #ldnbudget15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$93K request by African Community Council denied. #ldnont #ldnbudget15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arthritis Society request for \$10K denied. #ldnbudget15 #LdnOnt
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimists request for \$750K to help expand BMO indoor soccer ctr denied, city to extend lease on fields on Cuddy Blvd #ldnbudget15 #ldnont

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council nixes \$339K for Pillar Non-Profit Network, property tax bump holds @ 2.5% http://t.co/rPaZVEZEpj #LdnBudget15 http://t.co/ekdn447j6M
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you ever heard of Gender Budgeting within municipal budgeting process? What do you think #ldnont #ldnpoli #ldnbudget15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interest free loan up to \$100K provided by city hall to historic Palace Theatre for water damage repair/prevention. #ldnbudget15 #LdnOnt
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant to keep @EmergingLondon organization going with \$52.5K in funding denied. #ldnbudget15 #LdnOnt
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treasurer "finds" \$1.3M in unspent money from previous road/capital projects. \$ will be used for Dundas Flex Street EA study. #ldnbudget15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great work @JaredZaifman for identifying \$1.2 million in the 10 year capital plan that we don't need to spend #LdnBudget15 #ldnont #ch
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After 23hrs of #LdnBudget15 deliberations, council finishes w 2.52% proposed tax hike, \$63 more on avg home. Public comments Feb 19 #ldnont