

# ENGAGING LONDONERS

## 2013 Budget

EDUCATION. PARTICIPATION.  
WORKING TOGETHER. TRUST.  
**COMMUNITY** MUTUAL RESPECT.  
**ENGAGEMENT.** ACCESSIBILITY.  
BETTER DECISIONS. SHARED  
RESPONSIBILITY. EMPOWER.  
RESPONSIVENESS. INFORM.  
COLLABORATE. INCLUSION.  
TRANSPARENCY. CONSULT.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN – BUDGET 2013

For the last several years, the City of London has sought public input on its annual budget process by sending City staff and members of Council to various shopping malls around the community to conduct informal question and answer sessions with Londoners. While this represented an innovative approach to community engagement and public consultation at the time it was initiated, the needs and expectations of the community have changed and it is time to rethink the way we engage the public during the budget process.

This year, we are proposing a plan to engage Londoners in a more meaningful information sharing and dialogue session. Through a “Build a Budget” workshop, citizens will be invited to ask questions, share their concerns, and learn more about the mechanisms of municipal finance.

## BUILD A BUDGET

### *Why a Workshop?*

The idea of a “Build a Budget Workshop” is to invite Londoners to explore the 2013 Budget in an environment where they can not only learn the information they need and want to know about the budget, but where they have the opportunity to ask questions and provide thoughtful and meaningful input. While online tools and forms and public participation meetings provide valuable opportunities for citizens to provide their input, the workshop setting provides the unique and necessary environment for bringing community members together for multi-party discussions and mutual education.

Workshops serve as forums for members of the public to meet, share perspectives, and work together toward results. Bringing people together in a specific space and time to work on a particular issue helps:

- foster richer dialogue and discussion
- surface new ideas
- produce creative solutions to complex problems
- build common ground among individuals with different perspectives and experiences
- connect citizens to each other and to City staff, which helps build trust
- engage participants in the issue at hand by providing a forum for people to voice their opinions
- captures community thoughts/feelings on issues and provides mechanisms for recording input on decision-making processes

Typically, workshops are designed to ask participants to help identify issues, share their perspectives, prioritize items or ideas, map alternatives or comment on a draft project.

For large, complicated issues – like the budget – it is appropriate to provide a variety of methods for community members to engage. Adding a workshop to the engagement plans for the 2013 budget process means that engagement methods are being diversified to include formal, one-way feedback (Public Participation Meetings), online/write-in feedback (“Have Your Say” via the City website), and two-way consultative sessions (“Build a Budget” workshop). Combining these efforts with public presentations to Council and posting budget information online represents a blended effort to engage Londoners through both educating/informing them about the budget process and consulting/involving them in the decision-making process by inviting them to contribute their input and feedback.

For more information on best practices in municipal community engagement:

[The International Association of Public Participation](#)

[Report for the City of Guelph: Community Engagement Policies in National and International Municipalities \(The Research Shop, University of Guelph\)](#)

[Understanding Best Practices for Community Engagement in Municipal Contexts \(Sherry McGee, Master’s Thesis – Wilfred Laurier University\)](#)

### ***Risks of Disengaging***

Inadequate or inappropriate community engagement can lead to anger, outrage and animosity towards City Hall. London experienced the negative implications of inadequate channels for engagement on the budget during the 2012 budget discussions. Adequate, appropriate, and meaningful engagement opportunities improve the quality of decisions, demonstrate a willingness to work with the community to determine priorities, facilitate understanding of critical issues and government process, foster transparency and accountability, and help combat apathy and cynicism while building trust.

For more information on the risks of inappropriate engagement, [see “A Better Budget for a Better City: Ideas for a Healthy Budget Process in Toronto” from the Wellesley Institute.](#)

## ENGAGEMENT EVENT PLAN

In order to reach the maximum number of people and to offer flexibility to potential participants, the Build a Budget Workshop should be offered in two 2-hour sessions. Each session will run in the same manner, covering the same activities, but reach different sets of participants. The workshop will be open to anyone who wishes to participate – participants will be asked to register through an Eventbrite e-ticketing process. Registrations will be capped to avoid over-crowding and ensure each individual participant can become fully immersed in all activities.

The workshop will consist of several static stations – people can participate in these stations at any time throughout the session. As well, participants will take part in 15 -20 minute sessions on a rotating basis – giving everyone an opportunity to participate in every station/activity.

The Mayor, Councillors and senior City staff will also be invited to be active participants at each station.

The recommended venue choices, proposed activities or process for engaging participants, draft timeline and draft floor plan for the Build a Budget Workshops are detailed in the following Engagement Plan.

### Venue

In order to provide a central, easy to access location, we are recommending that the session be held at the Top of the Hall, City Hall Cafeteria. This venue is open and welcoming and is unique – it hasn't been used for public participation events previously. It also provides a unique view of the City, which serves as a great visual reminder of the community and the role that the City plays in it.

### Stations/Activities

#### Budget Basics: Introduction

| Description  | Objective/Impact   | Level of Engagement | Required Resources  |
|--|--|---------------------|---|
| At the beginning of the session, the City Treasurer (or designate) gives a brief introduction to the City's financial processes and context and an overview of the budget process. | <p>Provide participants with the critical information they need in order to understand the budget in accessible, plain language.<br/>Increased civic education</p> <p>Ensures the public is getting accurate information about the budget</p> <p>Sets the stage for the public to provide informed input</p> <p>Puts a "face" to Civic Administration &amp; builds recognition/relationships</p> | Inform              | <p>City Treasurer (or designate)</p> <p>Projector, computer, screen for Powerpoint (optional)</p> <p>"Infograph" Budget Guide as handout material</p> |

## Priority Pole

| Description   | Objective/Impact   | Level of Engagement | Required Resources  |
|---|--|---------------------|---|
| <p>A tall pole with several strings/ropes attached at the top and tied to lower stanchions (chairs) surrounding it. Participants will have the opportunity to place cards representing different services at various heights on different themed strings – items placed closer to the tall pole represent high priority services, those placed lower represent lower priority services.</p> | <p>Provides information about general trends in preferences, values of Londoners (which services take priority)</p> <p>Allows participants to anonymously rank different programs and services in terms of how they value them</p> | Consult             | <p>Flag-pole or other tall beam/pole</p> <p>Chairs/lower stanchions</p> <p>String/rope</p> <p>Post-cards with service areas written on them</p> <p>Clothes pins</p> <p>Poster with instructions</p> |

## Ask the City Treasurer

| Description  | Objective/Impact  | Level of Engagement | Required Resources  |
|--|---|---------------------|---|
| <p>Small groups of participants will sit with the City Treasurer (or designate) and be given the opportunity to ask anything they have ever wanted to know about municipal finance and the budget.</p> | <p>Provide clarity on complex municipal finance issues</p> <p>Open the floor to participant-directed discussions</p> <p>Gain understanding of common questions and knowledge gaps in the community</p> <p>Participants have the opportunity to build a relationship with The City Treasurer</p> <p>Accurate information from the expert source provides a personal touch to complex information</p> | Inform              | <p>City Treasurer or designate</p> <p>Table</p> <p>Chairs</p> <p>Markers/write able table cloth (brown paper)</p> |

## Worry Wall

| Description  | Objective/Impact | Level of Engagement | Required Resources   |
|--|------------------|---------------------|--|
| A large board or partition/section of wall designated as a space where people can write down their biggest concerns about the budget and post them (using sticky notes). |                  | Consult             | Wall or partition<br>Sticky notes<br>Markers<br>Poster with instructions |

## Fear Factor

| Description   | Objectives/Impact   | Level of Engagement | Required Resources   |
|---|---|---------------------|--|
| For a period of 15 minutes, small groups of participants will sit at a table with a member of City staff and be given the opportunity to share their biggest concerns/fears about the budget. | Deals with areas of high emotion or conflict by allowing participants to voice their concerns and be heard by staff<br><br>Allows staff to collect information on what Londoners are most concerned about – highlighting target areas for more communication or education to address fears related to misinformation. | Consult             | Staff person<br>Markers<br>Sticky Notes<br>Writable tablecloth |

## Budget Basics: Learn & Share, Concept Based

| Description   | Objective/Impact  | Level of Engagement | Required Resources   |
|---|---|---------------------|--|
| 2-3 stations where participants can work through specific budget concepts with Finance staff using Focused Conversations.<br><br>*Note: topic areas to be determined by FP&P based on key areas requiring public consultation | Participants will receive information on specific topics from City Finance experts and be asked to respond in a directed conversation that asks them to discuss what they have learned, their reaction to the information they were given, and asking what they think we should do (now that they have this information).<br><br>Guiding participants through the consultation will encourage participants to share their opinions and enable the conversation to flow from surface-level to depth. Engaging in this kind of activity will help elicit clear input, provide meaningful dialogue between staff and participants and among participants themselves, and honor the | Inform/Consult      | Finance Staff (1 per table) to guide discussions<br>Facilitation guide<br>Flipcharts & markers<br>Scribe/note-taker (can be volunteer from the table, could be the Finance staff table-leader) |

|  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
|  | high emotion that might arise during budget discussions while helping to move beyond emotion and into concrete direction for decision-makers. |  |  |
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## Visualizing the Budget

| Description   | Objective/Impact  | Level of Engagement | Required Resources   |
|---|---|---------------------|--|
| Large panels on puckboard (or similar sturdy material) with visualizations of budget information. Could include a panel with a picture of a house, with detailed “thought bubbles” explaining the average cost per household for roads, water, etc. Another panel could present the different service areas as proportionally sized images or “balloons” to demonstrate which areas represent the largest amounts of spending | Allows participants to see individual services in context of entire budget. | Inform              | Graphic of budget visualization, panel sized<br><br>Stand/easel for displaying |

## Speakers Corner

| Description   | Objective/Impact   | Level of Engagement | Required Resources   |
|---|--|---------------------|--|
| Set up in a quiet space separate from the main room, participants will have the opportunity to give their thoughts on the budget in a 30 second video clip. Like the MuchMusic Speakers Corner concept, speakers will have a set amount of time to say whatever they want. With participants’ permission, these videos can be edited together and posted on the City’s YouTube channel.<br><br>Additionally, the Mayor and members of Council could be given the opportunity to record a 30 second clip explaining their thoughts on the budget and budget process. These clips could be posted individually on the City’s YouTube channel. | Allows participants the opportunity to vent or express concerns, as well as any creative ideas, in an interactive format.<br><br>Recording the videos allows staff to catalogue and analyze comments.<br><br>Encouraging elected officials to share their views on the budget helps foster greater connection and education of residents on their councilors views – provides an opportunity for residents to learn more about and engage with their elected representative. | Inform & Consult    | Video camera<br><br>Staff person to record participants<br><br>Permission forms to use the videos publicly<br><br>Quiet space/partitioned room to record |

## Twitter Wall - #BudgetLdn13

| Description  | Objectives/Impact  | Level of Engagement | Required Resources  |
|--|--|---------------------|---|
| Using <a href="http://www.visibletweets.com">www.visibletweets.com</a> (free web-based service), tweets with the hashtag “#LdnBudget13” will be projected onto either a screen or a section of white/light coloured wall.<br><br>All tweets tagged with #LdnBudget13 will be collected into a Storify page (or similar) to store tweets for future viewing and analysis. | Helps spread participants’ learning to those not able to attend/allows participants to share their views with a broader audience<br><br>Brings public attention to the engagement process<br><br>Draws public attention to the budget process<br><br>Allows those who cannot attend to participate by tagging their tweets | Consult             | Projector<br><br>Computer<br><br>Established hashtag (#LdnBudget13)<br><br>VisibleTweets (free) |

## Draft Timeline

### Pre-Event

#### November/early-December:

- Finalize workshop format & materials
- Book venue

#### Mid-December through January (one week prior to event):

- Set up Eventbrite invitations
- Promote through media, social media, website
- Prep with FP&P staff – facilitation techniques, event overview

#### January – week of event

- Ramp up promotion
- Confirm attendance numbers
- Collect all outstanding materials
- Set up space
- Execute event

## Build a Budget Workshop - Event

Each Build a Budget Workshop is scheduled to take two (2) hours.

#### Welcome, Introductions and Opening Remarks

5 minutes

***Budget Basics: Introduction***

15 minutes

***It's time to Build a Budget!***

90 minutes – rotate through selected activities

***Q & A***

10 minutes

***Thank you!***

Adjournment



## ***Building on Our Successes***

Workshop events have become a familiar means for citizens to engage with the City. Similar events offered for the ReThink London process, London's Prosperity Plan, the City's Culture Plan and the Community Engagement Task Force have been successful in generating public interest and participation in decision-making processes that impact the community. These events have drawn hundreds of participants, have resulted in City-led initiatives trending nation-wide on Twitter, and produced positive media and community attention.

The community has come to expect opportunities for the kind of in-depth engagement offered through a workshop format and there is a significant appetite for opportunities to participate in interesting, innovative engagement processes, as demonstrated by the popularity of such events. This fall, the City has already received inquiries from citizens about what opportunities they will have to engage with staff and Council on the budget and have demonstrated interest in processes that will allow them to provide in-depth input on the budget process.

Providing citizens with the opportunity to engage with the City on the budgeting process will help educate Londoners about how decisions are made while capturing community priorities and input to inform those decisions.

## ***Learning from the Success of Others***

Several other Canadian municipalities have pursued extensive community engagement as part of their budget process. Initiatives vary in intensity from community to community – ranging from Town Hall meetings in smaller communities to large, months-long projects in larger cities, but most municipalities are undertaking at least some engagement on their budgets. Examples of what other municipalities are pursuing are highlighted below:

### **Calgary**

In 2011, the City of Calgary engaged over 23,000 Calgarians in an extensive community engagement initiative they named "Our City. Our Budget. Our Future." The consulting firm that worked with Calgary has produced a case-study of the project, available [here](#).

Tied to a transformational change in the way Calgary approaches its business planning and budgeting process, 'Our City. Our Budget. Our Future' used a wide variety of in-person and online engagement tactics, including several intensive community workshops, a mobile app and a strong social media campaign.

The plan produced is used not only for decision-making about the City's budget targets, but also informs Calgary's visionary 100 year plan. Calgary re-opened the project in 2012 to consider budget adjustments for 2013-2014.

This initiative won the Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators Willis Award for Innovation and is widely acknowledged as an example of best practices in community engagement. More information about Calgary's process can be found at on the '[Our City. Our Budget. Our Future.](#)' webpage and on [the City of Calgary website](#).

### **Whistler**

For its 2012 budget process, Whistler invited community members and business owners to an evening open house covering the municipality's budget and financial planning process.

Participants had the opportunity to review budget information with staff and council and discuss key budget decisions at small table sessions.

In 2013, Whistler is considering a much more intense community engagement campaign involving a Town Hall meeting, Four Agency Stakeholder workshop, an open house on a draft 5-year plan, and a community survey.

Information about Whistler's budget engagement efforts can be found [here](#) (2012) and [here](#) (2013 plan).

## Fredericton

In September 2012, Fredericton initiated its first public consultation campaign on the budget. Through four public forums, citizens were asked to help "Design Fredericton" and provide input on the City's budget priorities for 2013 and beyond. Staff provided an overview of the services the City provides, the City's current long term financial plan, and a breakdown of revenues and expenditures in the 2012 budget as a starting point for asking for public input. Each session was held in the evening for at least 90 minutes and invited participants to work in small groups to discuss budget priorities. The workshops were held in four different locations around Fredericton.

More information about the "Design Fredericton" consultation process can be found [here](#)

## Winnipeg

In 2011 and 2012, the City of Winnipeg has held public consultation sessions at the Winnipeg Convention Centre. These sessions have typically taken the form of a hybrid workshop/round-table where residents, businesses, community groups and associations have been invited to share their input on both the operating and capital budgets. Winnipeg's consultation sessions have, so far, been hosted by the Chair of the City's Standing Policy Committee on Finance and supported by the City's Acting Chief Financial Officer.

More information about Winnipeg's consultation process can be found [here](#).