

2023 Budget

Mayor's Speech

December 6, 2022
Check Against Delivery



Making a shift to achieve our ambitions

Good evening,

A year ago, this Municipal Council unanimously passed a program that set out a vision for this mandate. I am proud to see that we are already making headway on our seven major orientations, particularly when it comes to highlighting diversity and inclusion and in terms of addressing the climate emergency and protecting our biodiversity. We are also stepping up our investments in municipal infrastructures commensurate with our residents' needs and priorities—meaning, among other things, our roads—, and improving our best practices pertaining to effectiveness, efficiency and accountability.

In the past few months, we have been gathering data, validating, and making observations enabling us to make an accurate diagnosis. The coming year will be the time for upgrades based on our action plans and our ten-year vision, and **making a shift to achieve our ambitions**.



A disrupted environment

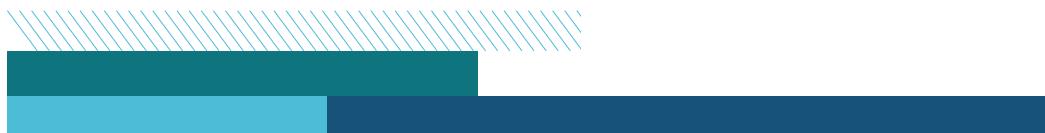
The 2023 budget review took place amidst significant disruptions. **At the economic level**, inflation is having a draining effect on the pocketbooks of our residents and the municipality. It now costs 35% more to purchase salt and de-ice our roads in the winter, and the costs of fuel, asphalt, concrete and professional services are also rising. Gatineau, like other Quebec municipalities, has very little leeway. And on top of it all, they must assume certain costs related to **fighting climate change** and the **new responsibilities imposed by Quebec**, such as providing land for new schools. It is important to remember that municipalities depend on property taxes, which, in Gatineau's case, represent 86.2% of the revenues in its budget.

Labour shortages also create pressure. They make it more difficult to keep up the pace and to carry out infrastructure projects within the territory. They compel us to prioritize, be more flexible as an organization, and to better position ourselves as an employer. We need to create a more predictable environment for our partners.

And then there are all the variables that were not even in play just a few months ago, all of which certainly affect the game plan:

- a new police headquarters;
- a regional hospital complex; and
- the construction of some ten schools over ten years within the territory, for which we are required to offer land that we do not have.

Between lucidity, ambitions and your needs, this Council must move ahead with major projects to meet our growing city's needs: a multi-sport complex in the Aylmer sector, greater east-west mobility and dedicated public transit, new cultural infrastructures in the downtown, a new congress centre in the downtown, and more...



Our success factors

Not only must we do all that, but we must also **set in place our success factors**, for both our organization and our partners. This requires providing the appropriate guidance and tools for our in-house teams, establishing a culture of organizational performance, optimizing the management of our infrastructure projects, and focusing on effective collaborations. We will need more agility and flexibility. I am proud to say that this shift is underway.

We are already better prepared than we were last year:

- Never before has this Council approved as much money for catch-up.
- We have allotted \$190 M over four years into 2025 to our roads.
- In 2023 alone, we intend to make the largest investment in Gatineau's history with a budget of \$52.5 M. This is almost twice what the previous Council allocated annually.
- We are definitely stepping up the pace, and things are moving ahead.
- We wanted an accurate picture of the state of our recreation, sport and community infrastructures. We now have it.
- The key element that this Council was missing last year was completed in time for the preparation of this budget: **the long-term financial plan**. We finally have comparative, current and reliable data. That is the ultimate tool on which everything else depends, particularly the vision for the next ten years. It helps set the foundation for our infrastructure management strategy, ensure the longevity of our assets and prioritize our projects as a Council to reconnect us with services to residents. Together, these elements enable us to make a **clear shift** in terms of **infrastructure governance and sound financial management**.



A thorough and realistic budget exercise

This very recent long-term financial plan for Ville de Gatineau has helped the Council make informed decisions and do everything it can to limit the municipal tax increase for the coming year. Gatineau's financial health is sound, but we must still remain prudent. Thus, we are presenting:

- a reasonable increase of **2.9%** in the residential sector's **tax bill**; and
- a **3.9%** increase for the non-residential sector.

Compared to the other municipalities, **this is one of the lowest in Quebec**. The decision in the last budget to allow **tax payments to be spread over four instalments** can now be implemented, and will come into effect this year. For the first time, Ville de Gatineau will be offering its residents this greater flexibility.



Significant service and environmental enhancements

This \$744.4 M balanced budget represents a 6.4% increase over the last budget. It brings us back to the difficult balance to be achieved between catch-up and action in the field. For the coming year, we are planning **\$4.5 M in service improvements for residents:**

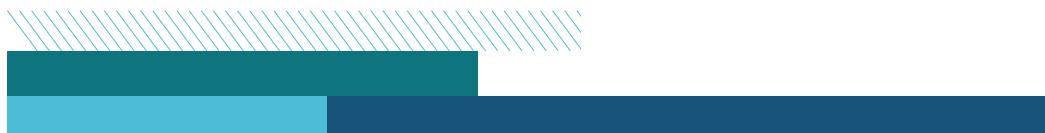
- better snow clearing operations;
- increases in the support program for cultural organizations; and
- investments in a municipal public service that is more representative of the population it serves.

We are setting up a recurrent investment fund of \$1.2 M for land acquisitions to address the housing crisis and meet the requirements to build new schools within our territory. Over the next ten years, this fund should reach close to \$80 M.

An additional \$1.2 M recurrent fund is planned to finance Gatineau's **first climate plan**. This fund will eventually add up to \$80 M.

That too is a first for Gatineau.

This budget places a **strong emphasis on the environment** through funding for a biodiversity charter, an urban forestry plan, a water management plan, and a residual materials management program that will involve participation by the industrial, commercial and institutional sector.



More agility in how we do things

The budget review also provided the Council the opportunity to set up a new governance for Gatineau to help it better define its priorities and capacity in terms of investing in and carrying out infrastructure projects. Given that there is no longer any certainty in the current market either in terms of finances or supply chains, the Council will be able to more closely follow progress on projects through regular updates. Any delays or cost increases will be quickly brought to our attention so we can reassess and make decisions based on our environment. New policies on managing the debt and surpluses, and on fees will also make our next budget exercises more productive.

That is what I call "bringing more agility to how we do things."



Marking a shift

Clearly, we have to keep working on making Gatineau a model of public administration that focuses on the know-how of its employees and partners. **All to meet expectations and contribute to the ultimate objective of offering residents the best possible service.**

I congratulate the Council members for the tone of their discussions and for sharing their perspectives throughout this second budget review in our mandate. Thank you for your big city vision. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the entire administration team for their support over the past year and for this exercise.

Thus, in 2023, we will be **making a shift to achieve our ambitions**. We are marking a shift, a real one, the kind that Gatineau, with its 20 years of experience knows how to do and deserves!

Thank you and good night.



France Bélisle
Mayor

