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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Municipal budget 2023: adoption of a realistic and responsible budget**

**Sutton, December 15, 2022**—The Town of Sutton’s 2023 budget was adopted by a majority vote of the municipal council at a special meeting held on Wednesday, December 14. Faced with an increase in the CPI of approximately 12% in two years and an average increase in property values of 39.4% due to the [new assessment roll](#), the Town of Sutton has nevertheless been able to reconcile these increases with maintaining the quality of its services to citizens, while taking into account the taxpayers’ ability to pay.

Tax increases were minimized by limiting the increase in current operating expenses to 3%, by reducing the general tax rate by 15% and by drawing on the unrestricted surplus. With an average property assessment of \$468,093, a homeowner, depending on whether they are in the village sector, the mountain sector or if they do not receive water or sewer services, will see their tax bill increase by between \$348 and \$444 per year. This corresponds to an additional amount of between \$29 and \$37 per month. It should be noted that taxpayers whose property is under the \$468,093 assessment threshold (which is the case for 72.9% of Sutton’s properties) will have an even smaller tax increase. In addition, this year the Town will offer something new by distributing the payments over four instalments instead of three.

#### **A reality to be faced**

The Town of Sutton’s 2023 budget will amount to \$14,706,731, which is \$1,551,233 (11.79%) more than last year. “Like every town in Quebec, Sutton must absorb all the cost increases without benefiting from the revenues as a result of galloping inflation,” commented Mayor Robert Benoit. “While the Quebec government is raking in billions of unforeseen dollars, cities must bear the odious task of raising taxes a few days before Christmas to balance their budgets. It is easy to understand why cities are calling for a new fiscal pact.”

Many municipalities have chosen to significantly, if not drastically, reduce their operating expenses. The Town of Sutton, however, cannot afford to do so in its current catch-up situation. “The Town’s spending budget since 2010 has been capped at approximately \$10 million in current dollars, not indexed to inflation,” explained the Mayor. “That is why spending has increased significantly in 2021 and 2022 to meet the critical need for basic services to the citizens of Sutton. We have succeeded in hiring qualified and motivated personnel. We have acquired management expertise that is the envy of surrounding towns. We have built a winning team! Do we want to go back?”



In keeping with a common budgetary practice in Quebec, the Town will draw on its unallocated surplus reserve (currently at \$1,300,000) to cover the anticipated shortfall in its current operating costs. “However, this unrestricted surplus allocation will be reduced to \$750,000 this year, compared to \$1,500,000 in 2022,” said the Mayor. “Last year, we chose to give taxpayers a break by taking advantage of the significant increase in real estate transfer tax revenues. As we announced last year, this solution is not sustainable in the medium and long term. Our intention is to eliminate this allocation within three years as a matter of sound management.”

Unlike other cities, no cuts have been made to services, even though the prices of some products essential to municipal operations have skyrocketed: diesel fuel has increased by 68% and mechanical parts by more than 50%, among others. Despite this, the level and quality of services will be maintained, thanks in part to greater efficiency. Since the Town of Sutton made a critical salary catch-up in 2021, all positions have been filled and departments reorganized thanks to excellent leadership. We are seeing an unprecedented level of productivity in our administration,” said the Mayor. “This is reflected in the quality of services rendered to our citizens if we judge by the general satisfaction of our population, especially regarding the condition of our roads.”

### **Ambitious infrastructure projects**

The adopted 2023-2024-2025 Three-Year Capital Construction Program (TCP) includes several major projects totalling \$52,713,563. In 2023 alone, the Town plans to carry out approximately \$11,000,000 worth of work, including the rehabilitation of the northern section of Western Street and the replacement of culverts on Réal Road and Chemin de la Vallée-Missisquoi. The year 2023 should also see the development of the former Filtex factory site, as decided by the council following citizen consultations. In 2024, a redevelopment of the infrastructure is planned on the site of the John Sleeth Community and Cultural Centre and the post office parking lot.

This 2023 budget, despite all its challenges, aims to carry out major projects, while maintaining the quality of services to taxpayers. “We have rebuilt the foundation of the building. Now we can build the upper floors,” concluded the Mayor.