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The City of Vaudreuil-Dorion's 2024 budget: A rigorous and responsible exercise in the face of many financial challenges

Vaudreuil-Dorion, December 11, 2023 – During a special meeting held on December 11th 2023, the City Council of Vaudreuil-Dorion, assisted by Olivier Van Neste – Director General, and Marco Pilon, FCPA, OMA – Director of Finance and Treasury, presented the 2024 budget in the order of \$110.7 million.

As was the case for most cities in Quebec, the 2024 budget exercise was a challenge for City Council and municipal services. Inflation and rising interest rates are having an impact on the City's financial responsibilities. In 2023, the tax rate was \$0.5515 and will increase to \$0.5984 per \$100 assessment in 2024. For a \$419,200 home, the current average estimate for a home in Vaudreuil-Dorion, this amounts to an increase of \$196 on the tax bill (\$3.77 per week). The City's 2024 budget therefore corresponds to an increase in taxes of 8.5% for categories including residential, 6 or more units and agricultural. Considering that water taxes are being maintained at \$275, the net increase will amount to 7.6% for the residential category and 11.5% for the commercial and industrial categories. It is important to note that the City's commercial and industrial rates remain extremely competitive in comparison with similar cities. The City's residential property tax, in addition to the water tax, includes all services such as collections (garbage, recycling, organic waste), SQ services and the various quota shares pertaining to the MRC, CMM and ARTM. Furthermore, the City of Vaudreuil-Dorion's irreducible expenditures for 2024 total more than \$96 million (operating costs, quota shares, removal and disposal of residual materials, snow removal, debt servicing, etc.) and represent 88% of total expenses.

"We looked at a variety of scenarios. It was a difficult task, but after carefully analyzing all the numbers, we needed to be realistic and make decisions that would be unpopular, but responsible. All the City's departments were involved, and I salute the work of the directors who had to go through each budget item before having to make difficult choices. Citizens are well placed to know that everything is costing more, and the same applies to the management of the City", said Mayor Guy Pilon.

During the special budget session, Treasurer Marco Pilon compared the total taxes for an average home in Vaudreuil-Dorion to 12 other cities in the area as well as cities of similar size. "Until just recently, our citizens were paying much less than other cities, even though we offer a considerable and diverse range of services. The rate needed to be updated due to the challenges we will face in 2024 and over the next few years. Despite the increase, our rate is very competitive at \$0.5985. For 2023, the amount paid for general property taxes and water taxes remain among the lowest among similar cities. The two coming years will hold budgetary challenges, but after that, significant cash inflows are expected, including revenues from the hospital's arrival," said Marco Pilon.

A wide range of free activities

The City of Vaudreuil-Dorion stands out for the number of free activities offered to its population, as Mayor Guy Pilon mentions: "Again in 2023, more than 400 free activities were offered to our citizens. The library alone offers citizens a collection that features over 95,000 printed and audiovisual documents, board games and a brand-new library of objects. Think of Parc Le 405, the concerts at Parc de la Maison-Valois, neighbourhood parties, Santa's post office and the Lumin'Art exhibition currently taking place. With all these activities, it's easy for a Vaudreuil-Dorion family to find fun things to do, and at no cost to them. In terms of protecting the environment, we offer 16 subsidies toward the planting of trees, the use of cloth diapers, the purchase of bicycles, etc. Added to this are the substantial discounts offered to our residents when they register for activities with our recognized organizations. Not to mention the exceptional measures implemented by our teams when required, for example the emergency camps set up during school strikes".

Moreover, the City is aware of budgetary issues and certain activities will be thoroughly reviewed. "The Festival de Cirque will take place, but as a more streamlined version, perhaps presented simply as a National Holiday with a show, fireworks, rides and food options. Activities that generated low participation will be removed in order to focus on programming that appeals to a greater number of people, such as Parc Le 405, the Rythmes d'été concerts, or day camps," added Mayor Guy Pilon.

Highlights of the 2024 Budget

- Residential tax rate increases from \$0.5515 in 2023 to \$0.5984 in 2024.
- Irreducible expenditures (salaries, debt servicing, SQ services, snow removal, etc.) represent 88% of the total budget.
- Financial assistance for Vaudreuil-Dorion organizations and citizens totalling nearly \$1 million.

Details of the City of Vaudreuil-Dorion's 2024 budget are available on the City's website at ville.vaudreuil-dorion.qc.ca under The City/Municipal Administration/Budget and financial documents.