

Community input sought for Budget 2025 ? and pizza is in the offing

Whether you're hungry for change or simply hungry for pizza, consider taking part in the Town's annual Budget Survey.

Community input is now being sought on Aurora's financial blueprint for the coming year through the Town's Engage Aurora portal at engageaurora.ca/budget2025.

"Your voice matters greatly in shaping the financial direction of our community for the coming year," says the Town. "This survey is your chance to share your priorities, concerns, and aspirations, ensuring that the budget aligns closely with the needs and desires of all residents."

Participants will be entered for a chance to win a pizza dinner for four valued at \$50.

"We want residents to feel empowered to shape the future of our community," said Mayor Tom Mrakas in a statement. "The 'Slice it Your Way' campaign encourages everyone to participate and contribute to decisions that impact Aurora. All feedback will be shared directly with the Aurora Town Council for their consideration during the budget planning process. The Town Council is committed to transparency and ensuring that the budget reflects the needs and priorities for the community."

This year's survey is more concise than in years past ? and it's the goal of the Financial Services department to "minimize" how much of a resident's time is needed to complete the survey, says Jason Gaertner, Financial Manager for the Town of Aurora.

"It is to reduce the number of questions yet hopefully glean from the remaining questions a feeling from residents as to whether [they feel] they're getting good value for their tax dollars as well as a bit of feedback on which Town services in particular they're most interested in. Generally speaking, we always leave a potential kind of comment box at the end? that captures any other feedback they might like to provide.

"We have one question that speaks to a lot of the major service areas the Town provides; there's a question that asks the respondent to identify the three service areas they would like to see more tax dollars spent and we're hoping through that to get an idea as to how our residents and businesses actually prioritize these services that are most important to them."

In previous budget years, Gaertner says he and his department have presented what they've taken from the survey directly to Council. This will again be the case this year, he stresses, and then Council has the "opportunity every year to adjust the budget in response to the feedback that we have received."

"Council is hearing what the survey respondents are saying," says Gaertner. "It's up to them to respond to that feedback and they do. Last year, we had 60-ish responses. We didn't give all 60 responses verbatim to Council, but we summarized what we heard and provided it to them in the form of a memo to the Budget Committee."

At the end of the day, it's all about getting that all-important resident feedback ? and Gaertner says the overriding message is this feedback does indeed matter.

"If the existing questions in the survey don't allow residents to get their feedback to us, by all means use that last question to share that feedback in words with us," he stresses. "If a resident doesn't want to do the formal online survey, send that feedback to ourtownbudget@aurora.ca and we can take feedback that way."

By Brock Weir