

Have your say on Aurora's 2026 Budget ? no matter how you slice it

The Town of Aurora is looking for your feedback as the 2026 Municipal Budget takes shape.

A survey on the Town's Engage Aurora platform wants you to weigh in on the services, projects and investments that matter most to you and your community, and those who participate will be entered into a draw for a pizza dinner for a family of four.

This year's survey, which can be found at engageaurora.ca/Budget2026, contains a number of primers on the factors that go into drafting the budget each year, and, it's hoped that the survey process this time around will be informative for both municipal staff and residents alike. According to Jason Gaertner, Deputy Treasurer for the Town of Aurora, among the key goals of the 2026 budget will be to continue delivering the services residents currently enjoy while addressing the impacts of inflation; to ensure services keep pace with growth; and to make sure the Town is best positioned to address an infrastructure funding deficit in maintenance, replacement, and rehabilitation.

"The infrastructure funding deficit is certainly a biggie that we're trying to address partially through this budget as obviously that funding does allow the Town to complete a lot of much-needed capital works," says Gaertner. "The Town's infrastructure in general is aging. A lot of it was installed 30 years ago, and a lot of stuff reaches the end of its useful life around 40 or 50 years. It's all just starting to show its age and requires some major rehabilitation or repair."

Time marches on when it comes to the wear and tear on infrastructure, and time is also marching on when it comes to the evolving tariff threats from the United States.

This is a factor that is being kept in mind during the budget process because so much of what the Town might need when it comes to capital projects ? such as parks development ? often comes from the United States.

The cost of park equipment is on the rise, says Gaertner, offering just one example. Rebar is another must that is usually sourced from the States.

"We are seeing some tariff implications of that nature and that is influencing inflation and it has caused concern," he says. "The Town has adopted a change to its procurement policy where it is intentionally trying to just source to Canadian sources and avoid using American options, if it can, to try to minimize those tariff costs to the Town. The Town is also looking at any opportunities where, if a particular expense requirement can be delayed, hoping that the tariffs will subside, it will do that as well."

Since the Town launched the 2026 Budget Survey at the end of May, Gaertner says there has been a "pretty strong" uptake from residents, and, by Monday morning, more than 300 responses had been received ? more than their total responses last year ? ahead of the survey's close in mid-July.

"There seems to be a strong response rate right now and it could also be driven by, perhaps, the state of the economy as well ? and more interest in the budget, too," says Gaertner. "This is also a key opportunity for residents to share potential new services that the Town could offer, or service enhancements that the Town could make available, now or in the future. One thing we tried to build into our survey is a little bit more of an educational component. I would certainly encourage survey respondents to take the time to read the little bit of education that is provided as part of the survey; I think they'll really help [residents] obtain a little bit of a better understanding of how municipal budgets work. There are also links to other details around how budgeting works in the municipal sector, which I think would be helpful based on some of the survey responses we get. Sometimes there's a perception that the Town is responsible for, let's say, police services or some other services.

"If people haven't already [filled it out] this is their opportunity to influence the actual budget that is approved by Council and it helps to ensure that it's going to the services that are most important to them and that those services are appropriate."

By Brock Weir