



COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT 2025 DRAFT BUDGET SUMMARY




February 2025


Background:

On December 3, the initial draft of the five-year financial plan (which includes the 2025 budget) was presented to Council. After first reading of the budget, Council directed staff to engage the community on the proposed 6.45% increase.

Throughout December, January and February staff used various channels to ensure community members were able to view the latest budget details and understand the ways in which they could be engaged. Information was made available to the community through two in-person open houses, District website, email subscriptions, social media and the Let’s Talk online engagement platform. Questions were addressed by staff and generally responded to within 24-48 hours after receiving.


Communications & engagement overview:

Date	Topic	Communication Channel	Format
November 29, 2024	Council looks to ensure stable tax rates for residents over next several years	District Website News Subscribers Facebook	Banner on homepage News Release Social Media post
November 29, 2024	Let’s Talk-Lake Country 2025 Draft Budget	Let’s Talk online engagement platform	Info on budget process Event (open house) info Q&A section Reference Documents Key Dates Important Links (council meeting)
January 14, 2025	Budget Open Houses announced	District Website Let’s Talk	Banner on homepage Let’s Talk link with details 

<p>Dec 19, 26, 2024 Jan 9, 16, 23, 30, 2025</p>	<p>Advertisements promoting Open House dates and Let's Talk Q&A link</p>	<p>Ads in Lake Country Calendar newspaper</p>	<p>2025 Budget Community Open House 2025 budget deliberations started in December.</p> <p>It is important that everyone get involved and let Council know your thoughts on the proposed budget.</p> <p>Budget details can be found online at letstalk.lakecountry.bc.ca. Review the information and leave your questions/comments on the official webpage. Staff will ensure feedback received from the community on the 2025 draft budget is relayed to Council before adoption of the five-year financial plan.</p> <p>Mark your calendar: Community Open Houses will be held on Tuesday, January 28 (5-8pm) at GESS and Thursday, February 6 (3-6pm) at Municipal Hall.</p> <p>Participate in person, and then attend or watch the February 18 Council Meeting via live stream or watch the recording after the meeting – your choice.</p> <p>Submit a question before the meeting through Let's Talk – Lake Country.</p>
<p>January 14, 2025</p>	<p>Budget Open Houses announced</p>	<p>Facebook (Events)</p>	

Jan 28 & Feb 6, 2025	Hosting of Budget Open Houses	In person	Hosted in person with Staff, Mayor & Councillors present for questions. Jan 28: 5pm – 8pm, GESS Feb 6: 3pm – 6pm, Muni Hall
January & February, 2025	Posts on social media	Facebook	<p>Facebook & Instagram</p> <p>Feb 4: Thanks for attending, come to next open house Facebook: <small>Views</small> 2,388 <small>Reach</small> 1,343</p> <p>Jan 26: Join us at GESS Facebook: <small>Views</small> 1,281 <small>Reach</small> 671</p> <p>Instagram: <small>Views</small> 501 <small>Reach</small> 424</p>

How many community members were reached?

<p>Let's Talk –2025 Draft Budget</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 406 unique visitors to the project page between November 29, 2024 – February 11, 2025 • 13 questions/comments posted (attached) • Draft Financial Plan and all materials from the open houses were included in the reference documents section, allowing those who didn't attend the open houses the same access to materials. • 2025-2029 Draft Financial Plan downloaded 126 times. 	
--	---

What the community has to say:

Throughout the community engagement period, citizens seemed less concerned about the budget percentage increase (likely as previous years were a higher amount) and more curious about the breakdown in expenditures. Themes from the Let's Talk platform consisted of:

- Amount of taxes that contribute to RCMP.
- Concern over lack of infrastructure in relation to the West Point apartment complex.

In summary:

2025 public engagement was conducted using in-person events and a variety of web-based platforms including Let's Talk, social media and the DLC website. In previous years, a town hall was hosted at Municipal Hall and the decision was made to host two open houses in place of a townhall. This allowed for a more casual atmosphere for residents to wander freely and connect with staff and Council members at their leisure. Those who preferred to engage online were able to review the material on the Let's Talk platform and use the Q&A feature. Given the new open house format, perhaps Council was able to engage with community members who were less inclined to attend the town hall in previous years.

Questions submitted through Let’s Talk – Lake Country

Question	Response
1. Where is a copy of the budget? I would like to see it	Hello Sandra, Of course, please find the draft budget on the Let's Talk page under '2025-2029 Draft Financial Plan'. This is located on the right-hand side of the page and is available as a PDF document. Thank you
2. The province collects monies from the speculation tax (starting n 2025). How much money is expected to be collected from Lake Country residents and how much of this money does Lake Country get back in the form of grants, support etc ?	Hello, Thank you for your question. The speculation and vacancy tax is administered by the Province. Local governments do not collect the funds from the provincially run program. Please find more information here: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/taxes/speculation-vacancy-tax (External link)
3. Is there a document that identifies every expenditure made by the DLC? This would normally be a spreadsheet like an Income Statement or Profit-and-Loss statement. Is it possible to review every single expenditure made by the DLC to identify exactly where the money goes? For instance, for all the "administration charges" listed in the draft, is it possible to identify who is paid for these services?	Page 24 of our audited financial statements shows the statement of operations and accumulated surplus for 2023 (aka income statement/profit & loss). Schedule 3 (starting on page 66) breaks it down by department for further detail. 2023 District of Lake Country Annual Report by Lake Country - Issuu (External link) Regarding “who is paid for these services” - the Statement of Financial Information shows a detailed listing of wages. Any changes to 2025 are highlighted in the budget supplemental operating request forms in the budget package. This also details how much was paid to all vendors/suppliers who received over \$25,000. 2023 FIA.xlsx (External link)
4. With the District of Lake Country increasing taxes to support RCMP is there an associated increase in traffic fine revenue expected? I do see protective services revenue increasing from 2024 and into 2025 but it is not separated the same way that the expenditures are...	Hi Morgan, We are budgeting for \$98,000 of traffic fine revenue, up from budget of \$84,000 in 2024. Adding additional officers does not necessarily correspond with a direct increase in this area, as based on the RCMP organizational chart the different positions do specialize in different areas. That being said with increased emphasis on traffic safety the traffic fine revenue is trending slightly up. Thank you for your question.

5. Just a follow up on my previous question regarding traffic fine revenue. With an average cost of \$138 per speeding ticket (some being much more than this) and an officer writing two tickets per day, should income not be at least \$100,000? I recognize that there are many, many other more emergent issues within the district that officers must focus on but this seems like an area where if taxpayers in Lake Country are fronting more of the costs, that the district should be able to generate revenue to support operations costs and increased staffing. I don't want to see the district become a police state but it can be more safe with speeding on the highway corridor as well as our side streets (particularly near schools) and reduction in impaired drivers.

Our traffic fine revenue is actually based on a formula in legislation. The total net traffic fine revenue for the province gets divided up based on total policing costs. So as our policing costs increase (which they have been significantly) our share will also go up. It is not based on the tickets directly issued in the area.

[Local Government Grants Regulations\(External link\)](#)

Division 4 — Traffic Fine Revenue Sharing

Traffic fine revenue sharing

8.1 The amount that a municipality may receive to help defray the cost of local police enforcement for a calendar year is calculated as follows:

$$\text{amount} = \frac{\text{TPC}}{\text{APC}} \times \text{App}$$

where

- A the aggregate municipal policing costs for municipal policing in
- P = British Columbia as published for the calendar year by the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General;
- A the annual appropriation for the calendar year for the Traffic Fine Revenue
- p = Sharing Program;
- p
- T the total policing costs for the calendar year for the municipality as accepted
- P = and published by the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General.
- C

[en. B.C. Reg. 135/99, s. 5; am. B.C. Regs. 27/2013, Sch. 2, s. 3; 99/2018, Sch. 2, s. 9.]

Certain District areas require hours outside of the typical Monday – Friday 8:30am – 4:30pm schedule to provide necessary services. To accommodate this and provide best value for taxpayers, departments such as facilities, parks, sewer, roads, fire, and utilities normal work patterns include weekend operations at regular rates (not overtime).

6. Why do you have to empty the garbage cans on weekends and holidays? Do you pay overtime or double overtime for the work? I saw this work on Sundays but I saw it again on January 1st. Was it necessary or just wasting money? What was the hourly wage for the person who was working on 1st of January? We are not happy for the tax increases again so we wanted to be sure you not wasting money.

7. What other options has council come up with to generate revenue instead of lazily increasing taxes? What cost saving measures is council proposing to reduce residential taxes?

Municipalities such as the District of Lake Country must follow provincial legislation which has limited revenue streams available however the District does always explore what's available both from the revenue generation side and the cost savings side, here are some recent examples and initiatives:

- Significant initiative and planning are going into trying to develop the Lake Country Business Park which would diversify the tax base, increasing the amount of business and light industrial tax revenue to the District and offset the residential tax burden
- Fees for services are set and reviewed regularly to try and achieve cost recovery in multiple areas such as planning, building, development, engineering etc. (worth noting though that local governments are only able to set fees to recover costs and cannot "profit" to further offset tax revenue).
- Development Cost Charges are being increased to ensure that developers pay their fair share and don't create additional burden on existing taxpayers.
- A dedicated grant writer has been hired to help pursue significant capital and operating grants
- All general ledger accounts are reviewed annually to look for potential savings and are refined to only provide levels of service as set by Council and nothing more
- Partnerships with other government agencies, regional districts, municipalities, First Nations etc. to achieve cost sharing where possible.
- Bulk buying with other governments on commonly purchased items to achieve economies of scale with larger purchases through group procurement.

8. What is council doing to address the inequity of service between communities?

Operating & Capital budgets are prepared with the entire District in mind. The District has a ward system where each of the 4 wards has a ward Councillor in addition to the Mayor and 2 Councillors at large. This helps ensure that each ward has specific representation but also that the best interests of the entire community are served.

9. With new proposal of 604 unit apartment complex. Will there be talks with city of Kelowna for shared revenue, as the residents would likely be using some of our assets and infrastructure? ie policing/fire, roads...

Thank you for your question. The majority of this project is currently within the Lake Country boundary and the City of Kelowna is currently in the process of transferring the remaining part of the property to Lake Country, therefore the property will pay Lake Country taxes.

10. Budget details can be found at Let's Talk - Lake Country. NOT FOUND how can we ask questions of a proposed budget for 2025 when we can't find it?? please post a direct link to the budget

The proposed budget is located on this page under 'Documents' and is titled '[2025-2029 Draft Financial Plan](#)'.

11. I am concerned about the increases for fire department spending and think that while our firefighters provide an essential service, they like many others in the province, are increasingly called upon to respond to support the faltering BC Ambulance Service. I am curious if the number of emergency calls has increased significantly over the last 15 years and if this is the justification for the increase in wages and full time staff allocated to the fire department? How many of the emergencies should be handled by BC Ambulance that our staff and volunteers end up having to attend?

As our community continues to grow, both in terms of number of people and their property at risk, the number of calls and complexity of calls grows with it. This has been further exacerbated by the number of wildfires and other climate related emergencies over the years. While our paid-on-call firefighting team has done an incredible job as our communities needs grow, the shift to more full time firefighters has become apparent to provide appropriate response times to incidents which obviously helps when it comes to saving lives but also helps when it comes to saving community members on their ever increasing insurance bills. Council establishes service levels through bylaw and there are certain equipment and response time thresholds the department must meet to achieve the relevant standards as well as achieve better insurance rates for those who live here. When it comes to medical incident calls, these made up approximately 47% - 54% of the calls pre COVID. In 2020 & 2021 this ratio dropped to 35% to 44% and in 2022 – 2024 the ratio is back to similar pre-pandemic levels.

I am also concerned that our fire department seems to have a blank cheque with our tax dollars to spend as they want to spend, not as the community needs (perhaps our perceptions on community "needs" are different. For example, in the proposed

I can assure you that the fire department does not have a “blank cheque” and all budget changes are heavily scrutinized and as previously mentioned the balance of community safety, insurance rates and the impact on taxes are carefully considered. Fire trucks and pickup trucks in addition to our entire municipal fleet budget are considered and only put forward on an as needed basis and are matched to department need. We ensure best value for taxpayers as well by repurposing vehicles

budget I see two new pickup trucks when the department already has so many; this seems like a want and not a need.

I also see \$75,000 for new thermal imaging cameras and while I understand that technology gets better and better over time, it seems to be a “want” not a “need”. I would like to see the reports to council with the rationalization for this expenditure and know what questions council asked of the fire department before including this in the budget (how often do thermal imaging cameras get used, how many do we currently own and what is wrong with them, are they required or a nice to have, etc.?)

We as a community should be looking for ways to generate revenue, and minimize costs. As new development is planned and occurs, these significant costs can and should be shared by all the new residents and the developers (not passed on or carried by existing residents - to the best of my knowledge taxes don't go down as population increases). Please ask all departments “is this a necessity” and “is this absolutely necessary” before approving a longer-term financial plan.

when possible and performing strong maintenance schedules to maximize useful life. For example we have an old fire vehicle that has been recently repurposed as a parks vehicle. The two trucks listed in the budget are for 2027 and 2029 in line with department needs and both represent planned truck replacements (not new).

Please see page 121 of the following link (page 122 of the PDF) for project rationale which includes enhanced safety, expediting search and rescue of occupants and speeds up fire attack:

[8e2b118ba8c2d4a1c863de4452a0035a_2025-2029_Draft_Financial_Plan_-_1st_Reading.pdf](#)

These tools should be replaced every 5-8 years and currently the department is working with third generation (10+ year) equipment. Also worth noting that staff have applied to the UBCM for a \$40,000 grant to help offset the impact to capital reserves which we believe we have a strong chance of receiving.

Absolutely, we completely agree. Initiatives are underway to try and diversify the District's tax base including plans to have a business park which would add much needed light industrial and commercial tax base to ease the burden on the residential class. Additionally, the District is in the process of updating its Development Cost Charges to ensure development pays its fair share of infrastructure that is related to development. We are also using more and more group procurement whereby buying commonly purchased assets in a group format with other municipalities the District can achieve lower costs from economies of scale usually reserved for much larger municipalities/organizations. There has been an enhanced effort when it comes to applying and receiving grants which we are beginning to see more and more benefit from. Funds that are recovered by our Fire Department after wildfire deployments in other jurisdictions are applied against capital to provide the community with a return on that investment. On an overall basis the full budget is scrutinized line by line in each department and we always seek to try and offset any necessary increases with efficiencies and cost savings where we can find it.

Equally as important as asking “do we need it” is how we manage the current taxpayer owned resources that we have in the community. I’m curious about the District of Lake Country’s asset disposal policies and process and would love to ensure that they are followed, with the goal of generating revenue to recoup tax dollars where possible. Are you able to share a copy of this policy with residents and provide some confirmation that it has been / is being followed? I searched online and couldn’t find anything and I wanted to confirm.

Lastly, on the point of generating revenue. The old fire hall location still has not been sold. With the new BC Tree Fruits property purchased, the old firehall land theoretically should be able to be sold. If not, what is the reason for holding on to it? I don’t see anything in the budget for rental revenue of the property and it appears as though there is one tenant (the food bank) using the main building, and another tenant (the First Nations administration) in the other building. In the five year financial plan should rent or asset sale be considered?

Please see the following “Disposal of surplus equipment, materials or goods” section of our purchasing policy which we can confirm we follow found here: [purchasing-policy](#)

5. DISPOSAL OF SURPLUS EQUIPMENT, MATERIALS OR GOODS

Surplus assets or equipment, which the District no longer needs, shall be disposed of through one of the following methods, as approved by the Chief Financial Officer:

- Re-use by another District department.
- Direct Scrap: where staff will arrange for disposal at the nearest landfill or appropriate recycling facility for items deemed of no value.
- Auction sales including electronic auctions such as BC Shared Services.
- Sale by Bid Process where competitive bids are sought through a publicly advertised process.
- Trade-ins where the surplus equipment is included in a competitive process for the procurement of new equipment, as part of a trade-in arrangement.

Direct sales of surplus equipment, materials or goods to District employees or their direct family members is not permitted.

While it’s true the old fire hall could be sold, and Council certainly has the ability to in the future, so far it has not made financial sense to do so. The old fire hall is not serviced by sewer meaning the highest and best use (commercial/industrial) cannot be met, meaning the land could only be residential lots and the cost to remove the existing building is a limiting factor on residential development. The District has limited land that it owns and so far the trade off of the relatively small financial benefit compared to making use of the existing building and providing a service to some of the municipalities partners has not been worth selling the property.

Communications and Engagement Strategy

12. Several years ago the Roads dept asked for and received an extra \$154 thousand to convert all DLC owned streetlights to LED, after BCH had converted all their streetlights. LED lights are much more energy efficiency and last much longer (lower maintenance costs) and BCH charges less per streetlight - saving DLC money. Not to mention much better quality of lighting compared to the horrid yellow sodium lights. However, despite the budget allocation the DLC lights haven't been converted to-date, so Q#1 is why not? Q#2 was that a one-time ask, or did the \$154k become an annual extra? Q#3 What happened to those funds (are they held in a designated reserve)? and most importantly Q#4: when is the LED conversion going to get done?

This project has been delayed due to capacity, costing and supply issues. This was a one time ask and was not an on-going expense. The project is to be funded from a reserve; since it hasn't been spent yet nothing has been drawn from the reserve and as such those funds have been invested and earning investment income until they will be drawn upon in 2025 when spent. The project is scheduled to be completed in 2025.

13. Last year council retracted a water service ask of several communities- what are the next steps for the water services for Carr's Landing/ Coral Beach areas?

The District is seeking senior government support to help offset the financial burden of implementing the strategy, though funding is not guaranteed. If no support is received and there is still a lack of community interest in proceeding, each water system in the area will need to explore its own long-term solution for maintaining water service delivery.

