



**POLICY STATEMENT**

**District of Maple Ridge**

<b>Title:</b> Financial Sustainability Plan	<b>Policy No :</b> 5.52 <b>Supersedes:</b> NEW
<b>Authority:</b> <u>Council</u> <b>Approval:</b> <u>October 26, 2004</u>	<b>Effective Date:</b> <u>October 27, 2004</u>
<b>Policy Statement:</b>  <b>The District's financial planning will be guided by the attached Financial Sustainability Plan policy guidelines.</b>	
<b>Purpose:</b>  A proactive strategy is required that will lay the groundwork for the continuance of high quality services and provide a legacy for future generations. It will position the Municipality to meet financial obligations and take advantage of opportunities that arise; it will also mean that residents can look forward to equitable and affordable taxation.  The policies should be designed and structured to develop principles that guide, support and respect the direction of the community.	
<b>Definitions:</b>	

## FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

### Policy Guidelines

#### **Purpose:**

A proactive strategy is required that will lay the groundwork for the continuance of high quality services and provide a legacy for future generations. It will position the Municipality to meet financial obligations and take advantage of opportunities that arise; it will also mean that residents can look forward to equitable and affordable taxation.

The policies should be designed and structured to develop principles that guide, support and respect the direction of the community.

#### **Policy Guidelines:**

##### **1. Growth in Tax Base:**

*Discussion: Maple Ridge is a growing community and all indications are that this will continue. Growth brings in new tax revenue which must be estimated using the best available data.*

##### **Policy 1.0**

*Real growth will be set based on the experience of the previous planning period and the projections for the ensuing period, using information provided by the BC Assessment Authority, the Planning Department and the Finance Department.*

##### **2. Service demands created by a growing community:**

*Discussion: Growth creates demands for service. Often, the additional tax revenue is not sufficient to pay for the costs of providing the services necessary to keep with established standards. It is important that the demands created by growth be recognized and efforts be made to maintain existing standards.*

##### **Policy 2.0**

*Business Plans should provide details of the demands for service created by growth and should include options as to how the demands can be met and existing standards maintained.*

##### **3. Tax Increase:**

*Discussion: Rising costs of existing services must be recognized and we must resist the temptation to reduce non-renewable reserves to fund operating expenses.*

##### **Policy 3.0**

*Each Spring, Municipal Council will consider the tax increase required for the ensuing planning period by first covering the projected cost increase for existing services and then considering other enhancements (Please also see Policy 4.)*

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### 4. New Services and Major Enhancements to Existing Services:

*Discussion: The tax increase established in Policy 3 essentially allows us to provide the same level of service to the existing tax base. It is not designed to provide for new services or major enhancements to existing services.*

#### ***Policy 4.0***

***New Services or Enhancements to Existing Services will be funded by a combination of:***

- 1. Reduction in the cost of existing services. This may include a reallocation of resources from one area to another.***
- 2. Increase in other revenues.***
- 3. A further increase in taxes.***

### 5. Efficiencies, Demand Management & Service Level Reductions:

*Discussion: The continuous search for efficiencies is a sound business practice that we have embedded in the way we do business. Also, we do not have the resources to meet all of the demands that are made of us. Demand must be managed to make sure that expectations reflect our fiscal realities and the need to contain expenditures. Areas where service level reductions may be possible must be identified and brought forward for Council's consideration.*

#### ***Policy 5.0***

***Business Plans will identify demand management strategies and will include options for Service Level reductions.***

### 6. Alternative Revenues & External Funding:

*Discussion: The District should strive to produce non-traditional revenues and diversify its tax base.*

#### ***Policy 6.0***

***All departments will make every effort to access external funding opportunities from other levels of government & the private sector. All departments will endeavor to develop partnerships, strategic alliances and co-shared project funding to assist in the reduction of expenditures to the District. An expansion of the tax base, beyond existing ratios, can be used to reduce the general tax rate, increase service levels and/or provide new services.***

## FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

### 7. Infrastructure Maintenance & Replacement:

*Discussion: The District has in excess of \$1 billion invested in its infrastructure. This includes our direct investments and investments made by the development community that are turned over to the municipality to operate and maintain. As our community grows, this investment increases. We need to develop a plan to keep the infrastructure in a proper state of repair to avoid costly failures.*

#### **Policy 7.0**

*The District will establish an inventory of its infrastructure and will keep it up to date. A maintenance/replacement program will be established using best practices. By 2015, this program must be fully funded and the current 5 year financial plan should start to address this on a phased basis. The required tax increase will be beyond that set out in Policy 3.*

#### **Policy 7.1**

*Annual Operating & Maintenance budgets will be adjusted to accommodate growth.*

### 8. Debt Management:

*Discussion: The maximum amount that the District can borrow from external sources is set by the Community Charter. Every effort should be made to keep debt levels at a minimum however there may be instances where borrowing money is appropriate i.e. financing major infrastructure projects. Borrowing in such instances allows the costs of the project to be spread out over the useful life of the asset. This results in the costs being paid by future beneficiaries and not just by current taxpayers.*

#### **Policy 8.0**

*Projects that are to be funded by external debt should be submitted to Council with a business case, including recommendations on how the debt will be serviced.*

### 9. Fees and Charges:

*Discussion: Fees & Charges are a significant portion of our revenues. They will be reviewed on a regular basis to avoid major changes and to provide the public with adequate notice of those changes. The review will include an analysis of our costs as well as what is charged by other municipalities.*

#### **Policy 9.0**

*Fees & Charges will be reviewed and adjusted annually. The public will be provided no less than 3 months notice of those changes.*

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### 10. Accumulated Surplus:

*Discussion: Accumulated Surplus represents non-renewable accumulated savings and should not be used for operating purposes or for normal capital purposes.*

#### ***Policy 10.0***

***Accumulated surplus will be considered as a funding source for extraordinary one-time expenditures.***

### 11. Reserve Funds and Reserve Accounts:

*Discussion: The District has a series of reserve funds and reserve accounts that are established for various purposes. They can help us deal with unexpected variations from normal operations, which could include natural, environmental or economic events. As well, they can assist in funding opportunities that arise.*

#### ***Policy 11.0***

***Each Reserve Account and Reserve Fund will be governed by policy that outlines its purpose, the types of expenditures permitted and the desired level of the reserve. Strategies for achieving the desired level of the reserve will be included in the Business Plans.***

### 12. Capital Projects:

*Discussion: Many capital projects have funding sources other than General Revenue. For instance, a substantial amount of infrastructure is funded by Development Cost Charges. Once the project is completed, its operating costs, and replacement are usually provided for by General Revenue. These ongoing costs must be clearly understood, before a capital project is approved.*

#### ***Policy 12.0***

***Each Capital Project submitted for consideration must clearly spell out the full initial cost as well as future costs, including operating & life cycle cost, and demonstrate the source of sustainable funding for such costs.***

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### 13. Carry forward Projects:

*Discussion: From time to time, funding is allocated for a project (capital or operating) but the project is not completed in the year that it was budgeted for. An example of a capital project of this nature is the land required to complete Firefighters Park. An example of an operating project would be the work to be done on the Official Community Plan. Many times, the reason for the delay is due to factors beyond the control of the municipality. For instance, some projects are delayed while we try to secure funding from other partners. Projects can also be delayed if we are not able to negotiate what we believe to be a fair price. In such instances, funding is “carried forward” in recognition of the fact that project is still required and we want to be in a position to complete the transaction, once other approvals are obtained. Nonetheless, there is a need to review carry forward projects, in light of other priorities that might have emerged.*

#### ***Policy 13.0***

***Corporate Management will complete a detailed review of Carry forward Projects, in light of other priorities that might have emerged.***