

Budget Speak / Parlons budget
An Experiment in Public Deliberations Hosted by Urban Wards Councillors
February 10, 2015

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Annex 1: Workshop Process and Methodology

After a welcome and introduction by ward councillors each evening, bilingual facilitation was lead by Manjit Basi and Catherine Laska from Citizens Academy. In an effort to offer some information to those with more limited knowledge of the budget process, two brief presentations on key budget terminology and timeframes were interspersed throughout the evening. The presentations reviewed the distinction between operating and capital budgets, mandatory and discretionary spending, rate and tax supported expenditures, term of council priorities, Standing Committees and budget envelopes.

Much of the evening was spent on small group table discussions, brainstorming and prioritizing activities, and a larger group debrief with coloured voting cards. A brief description of each of the small group table exercises follows.

Small Group Exercise 1 – Budget 2015 Thematic Pillars

The 2015 draft budget was presented to Council by the Mayor on February 4th. It positioned suggested budget changes within four thematic pillars, to bring about a city that is *affordable, caring, sustainable* and *prosperous* for all residents. At their table, participants were invited to discuss their own understanding of each of these four themes, and capture ideas on flipchart paper. The first evening, participants were instructed to compare findings at several other tables; the second evening, tables were paired up to share back and compare.

Small Group Exercise 2 – Ranking Proposed Term of Council Priorities

Participants were given a list of proposed term of council priorities included with Budget 2015 highlights, and invited to rank them individually, to ultimately identify their top 3 and bottom 3 priorities. Thereafter they were to discuss as a group to determine the table's top 3 and bottom 3. This exercise was only performed on the first evening.

Small Group Exercise 3 –Recommendations for Councillors

Participants were invited again to discuss WHAT they would recommend be done or changed to build the city they want and WHY. They were also asked to discuss HOW to make this happen, given the City's limited resources. Each table was to capture any consensus, and indicate their recommendations regarding budget tradeoffs, increased or decreased revenue or spending, or what efficiencies, by-laws or new partnerships would be required.

Open Voting

At the end of each evening, the facilitators asked a series of questions for participants to vote with coloured cards, based on their level of agreement – totally agree, totally disagree, or unsure/need more information.

Bike Racks

Posters with the heading « Bike Rack » were available for participants to « park » any question they had or bring additional ideas to the attention of their Councillor.

Evaluation Forms

Participants were asked to fill a short evaluation form at the end of each session. Four questions asked them to provide a rating on a scale of 1 to 5, and this was followed by three open-ended questions : What worked well? What could be improved? Other ideas or comments.



Annex 2: Budget Speak West – Raw Exercise Responses

Exercise 1: Budget 2015 Thematic Pillars

These ideas are not presented in any particular order or priority

A Caring City:

1. Housing for everyone -- Top of mind for almost all tables was increasing the availability of affordable housing for vulnerable, sick and homeless people. There is concern that much demand is not being met by affordable housing supply. While there will always be a need for emergency shelters and day drop-in centres, housing is essential to deal with homelessness, mental health and addictions. Housing is a cornerstone around which multiple agencies and funding sources can partner. Some called for better quality public housing. Encourage uploading of housing to the Ontario government.
2. Secure food policy – Feed neighbours.
3. Community-driven social and health services –City’s planning should be participatory and collaborative. Their focus needs to be on vulnerable people, seniors, youth programmes (afterschool and recreation), child care and new immigrants.
4. More mental health support – Several asks.
5. More public amenities – There should be public toilets in transit stations and parks city-wide. Also, more water fountains and benches. Prioritize common spaces for civic life / civic pride. Libraries. Accessibility.
6. Focus on safe active transportation – Keep transit fares low. Priorities include better transit to hospitals, schools, airport, etc. Improve road safety for non-motorized travel. Improve snow removal on sidewalks. Need for train crossing safety program.
7. Protect Scott Street residents from bus diesel fumes. Reduce buses on Scott-Albert detour.
8. Free swimming lessons for children.
9. Maintain existing homeowners in the face of major developers coming in.
10. Gang problem and access to jobs
11. More funding from the provincial and federal governments.

A Sustainable City :

- Be environmentally responsible (water, air, green), and have a water strategy.
- Address climate change plan faster. Cooperate with other tiers of government.
- Move towards 100% renewable energy quickly for city facilities. Prioritize a city solar panel program.
- Go transit, stop subsidizing cars. Go on a road diet. Prioritize active transportation, pedestrian infrastructure, then transit, and thirdly roads. Status quo parking fees don’t make sense when transit fees go up.
- Protect existing trees, distinctive trees, especially mature trees. Stop the taking down of mature trees, enforce existing rules. No more loss of trees to development and construction.
- Maintain the existing tree cover, and expand urban forest and tree planting.
- Make forestry oversight distinct from that of road and traffic as in the past (e.g. Ottawa Forestry and Green Space Advisory Committee)
- Prioritize food security, community gardens, mobile food markets, local food systems.
- Make users pay for waste management. Prioritize accountability for garbage and recycling. Charge for throwing out food. Recycle styro-foam and plastic bags
- Plan and speed-up implementation of complete streets, with segregated bike lanes for cycling and pedestrian safety top of mind. New developments to include bike lanes and racks, walkability to grocery store and public transit. Plan for green space and public space.
- Promote green roofs. Make them required on commercial buildings.



- Promote permeable surfaces.
- Snow removal. Maintain cycling network all year round. Shovel stairs.
- « Paper » retrofits program via property taxes (?)
- Address traffic issue on King Edward Ave.; must consider pedestrian safety.

An Affordable City:

- We must live within our means: housing, transit, health, food, recreation, taxes must be affordable.
- Holding the line on taxes is not the top priority; we need to focus spending, not cut services. We must make better use of existing resources. Make transit more efficient, reduce near empty buses. Keep rents low.
- More emphasis on affordable housing. There must be affordable housing minimum requirements in all developments.
- Address homelessness, mental health and addiction.
- Base property taxes on services and consumption.
- Why freeze garbage fees? We are okay with increasing costs for more garbage, increased water rates, and spending dollars on conservation efforts.
- Transit fees -- Lower or freeze transit fares. Increase parking fee along with transit fees. If fees are raised, evaluate the need for a better subsidy program. Charge for transit to reflect the cost of long distance. Increase the cost of parking everywhere.
- Stop preferential tax for shopping centres to reflect the real cost of parking.
- Subsidize child care
- Provide more free recreation opportunities for children.
- Invest in community gardens.
- Invest more in prevention / early intervention in order to reduce the use of high priced services such as paramedics, police and firefighting.

A Prosperous City:

1. Effective local transit to support local needs and business (+ pedestrians and bikes), but LRT is only one piece of a broader picture.
2. Follow Churchill Avenue segregated bike plan everywhere.
3. For most, a prosperous city means a diversified economy, with thriving local businesses, good jobs for all and low unemployment.
4. The municipal job strategy should not be to lay off people.
5. Encourage the creation of local business and jobs close to where people live. Go for mixed zoning of new residential areas to include commercial business and services at the community level
6. Focus needs to be on the most vulnerable, with youth employment, small business grants and income equity. Provide better job opportunities for youth. Spend dollars to reduce inequality.
7. Have Ottawa Tourism and others use local companies for things like procurement and promotional campaigns.
8. Expand libraries, such as in the Lebreton Flats development.
9. Invest in arts, cultural development, music, artists, etc. to attract the creative class
10. Get public input into the innovation centre, hubs, public markets.

Exercise 2: Ranking Proposed Term of Council Priorities

Many participants found the exercise of ranking proposed Term of Council Priorities difficult. Some of the City's proposed priorities were very specific, while others were very broad, open to



interpretation and lacking clear definitions or benchmarks. Most tables had an easier time to identify their top three priorities than the bottom three. The most popular top priorities were

1. affordable housing and homelessness, and
2. sustainable mobility and transit plan.

Some new priorities proposed included: engaging youth; participatory budgeting; green initiatives; EcoDistrict, lowering the cost of living; eliminating food waste; protection of distinctive trees in the urban core.

For 8 of the 13 tables, the Ottawa 2017 celebrations were marked as a bottom three priority. At least 4 tables felt that accountability and oversight, while critical, are not to be singled out as Terms of Council Priorities because this is integral to the City's mandate. Note that this priority is also a top priority for several tables that believe that waste and mismanagement deserve more attention.

Many commented there was little or no context provided for each proposed priority and that there is no obvious link between the term of council priorities and budget allocations. They found it difficult to rank multi-billion dollar items along with others that do not call for significant funding. While this exercise stimulated interesting discussions, it was dropped to allow for greater focus in other areas for the second Budget Speak session.

Exercise 3: Group Recommendations for Councillors

Environment

- Environmental issues linked to climate change *BECAUSE* we risk losing the Earth on which to build the city
- Increase funding for energy management including climate change

Forestry

- Increase budget for forestry *BECAUSE* trees help clean the air and reduce health costs
- Increase fines for illegal removal of trees
- Preserve mature trees in urban core
- Increase forestry implementation of rules *BECAUSE* canopy cover increases sustainability and tourism with a positive environmental impact / *HOW?* Raise tax on industries to cover cost.

Transit and Transportation

- Keep transit fees low for increased accessibility /*HOW?* with tolls for cars and increased parking fees
- Invest in active transportation as a top priority *BECAUSE* it will keep people healthy and it's better for the environment / *HOW?* corporate sponsorship of active transportation routes, raise taxes
- Favour city transit *BECAUSE* it will reduce road maintenance and reduce traffic in neighbourhoods
- Include toilets in LRT stations *BECAUSE* they are essential for people / *HOW?* a cost-shared capital cost
- Bike lane on Bronson for safety. /*HOW?* From capital budget for roads and increased development fees
- Increased spending on transit service *BECAUSE* people want more frequent service and to encourage more ridership / *HOW?* Increase property taxes, provide allocation?
- Keep transit fees stable



- Improve sidewalks and services in the core – such as public washrooms on LRT / *HOW?* Reallocate \$ by lowering road standards

Community Services and Safety

- Building community is particularly significant for a city like Ottawa *BECAUSE* it has a mobile population that may not have roots in the city.
- Invest more in community services and public health *BECAUSE* it will lead to reduced need for policing / *HOW?* cut the police budget, set user fees for solid waste
- Evaluate the quality of social services, and index growth to demand *BECAUSE* the demand for services is growing, but spending without indexing is not keeping pace / *HOW?* cut protective services and police budgets, seek cost recovery from feds for policing
- Keep or increase community services such as housing, daycare *BECAUSE* they contribute to equality / *HOW?* see above, and increase parking fees
- Recreation services must be more affordable and inclusive *BECAUSE* we want better equality of access. / *HOW?* From capital budget for roads and increased development fees
- Increased subsidization of recreation fees *TO* make services more accessible for those who really need it, but charge more for those who can pay / *HOW?* Increased recreation fees with a portion going to subsidization for those who need it
- Reinvestment plan in community and social services – increase grants to community funding and services for homeless / *HOW?* Increase property taxes by 1% = \$14 million

Police Services

- Improve efficiency in police services to save money and provide better service / *How?* A+
- Reduced spending on militarization of police force (e.g. armoured tank) *BECAUSE* we don't need a hyper militarized police force

Housing

- Invest more in housing *BECAUSE* it will lead to reduced need for policing and improved health and well-being / *HOW?* with user fees for waste, and push prov/fed to invest more
- Increase affordable housing / *HOW?* Force developers to fund affordable housing in exchange for a density exemption. Take rundown affordable housing, sell to developer, segregate funding for maintenance of new buildings (?)

Urban Services

- Chase down property owners with derelict properties (e.g. Barrymore at Bank and Somerset, brownstones on King Edward Ave,) *BECAUSE* they are depreciating value and wasting key property / *HOW?* Status quo on revenues but requires reallocation of administration.

Health Services

- Maintain prenatal and postnatal care *BECAUSE* it builds communities and provides vital assistance for young families (i.e. vaccines). / *HOW?* Re-allocate funds.

Libraries

- Invest in Rosemount Library and spend earmarked funds of \$100,000 *BECAUSE* it builds community and increases prosperity. *HOW?* Revenue neutral, just use funds allocated.

Finance and Economic Development

- Restructure planning cycle *BECAUSE* of city's dependence on federal and provincial budget processes.



- Get rid of the 2% tax increase ceiling *BECAUSE* it is an election ploy which is unduly limiting and introduces false restrictions
- Improved by-law enforcement – different between urban and suburban *BECAUSE* the system is flawed, ineffective, doesn't need increased dollars, but different working methods
- Residential zoned properties that are income generating (e.g. rooming houses) should be taxed at the commercial rate *BECAUSE* they generate income as a commercial property / *HOW?* increase property taxes
- We need more revenue at the municipal level for obvious reasons *HOW?* road pricing and higher percentage of gas tax
- Charge for garbage and don't subsidize waste management *HOW?* increase user fees
- Take money from building roads and road widening capital budget *BECAUSE* we need to shift away from car dependence
- Reduce capital formation budget to 5% /*HOW?* Take away money from any road building in this budget. Do not cut the building of community centres, no cuts to other aspects of capital budget, etc.
- Increase funding for sustainable mobility (combination of transit and neighbourhood safety from the original list)
- Less money on roads, more money for cycling and pedestrian commuting
- Increase revenue by charging rural people for plowing their long roads like we are charged for transit
- Enforce parking bylaws for revenue generation *BECAUSE* parking in no parking zones generates \$160 each time, at recreation centres, schools, homes
- Address relaxed regulations on private water cisterns *TO* avoid higher water costs and make city more resilient /*HOW?* Make grants available to pilot a program

City Administration

- Don't cancel programs with staff that already exist *BECAUSE* reinvesting and restarting programs is more costly than sustaining them.
- Rework budget categories to reflect common sense *BECAUSE* this will facilitate authentic input into trade-offs and increase buy-in to results /*HOW?* this doesn't cost much, it calls for a change in culture and accounts (for example, no more lumping together of roads, bike paths, parking and forestry)
- Empower staff to share expertise publicly
- Political buy-in to support staff to study best practices internationally – electronically FCM *BECAUSE* Ottawa needs to adopt best practices in the world to avoid bad management of outcomes like the bridge on the airport parkway / *HOW?* Cultural change, no funding involved.
- Independent budget officer to provide a challenge function over all Standing Committee budgets. *WHY?* For better decisions, more efficiencies, to highlight failures. *HOW?* It would pay for itself over time.
- Value for service *BECAUSE* we need a clearer budget process with explicit identification of publicly owned assets /*HOW?* Revenue neutral. Reshaping of existing practices.

Annex 3: Budget Speak West – Raw Feedback Form Responses

On the basis of 52 evaluation forms collected, the overall quantitative assessment was positive, with 3.4 the lowest rating on a 1 to 5 scale, where 1 means very little, and 5 means a lot.



Question	Scale of 1 to 5
1. Was the information provided in the session about the Ottawa's budgeting process clear and useful for you?	3.5
2. Did you feel you had sufficient opportunity to contribute and participate in the discussion about priorities and tradeoffs?	3.7
3. Will you participate in other events like this, hosted by your Councillor?	4.7
4. Will you participate in Standing Committee meetings or other opportunities the City is organizing to hear the public's views about Budget 2015?	3.4

5. What worked well?

- Allowed people to have a REAL discussion about their budget desires
- Group discussions
- Discussions
- Having people work together
- The emphasis on small groups was fantastic! I am SO SICK of the panel-at-the-front and Q&A format. It should be extinct!
- Useful information, but too much to explain in limited time. Hearing from other citizens who can explain how the city works. It is opaque and many details are concealed.
- Access to a resident who had knowledge that was not available to the session
- Good discussions
- Small tables/groups
- The pace and format
- Budget 101 should be a half day course! Like the "planning primers" series offered by the city's planning group
- Considering the subject, facilitators really hit a home run!
- Tables were a good size (7-8 people). Everyone got a chance to speak and be heard.
- Goodwill
- Great first start! Information OVERLOAD. Cards were fun
- Small group tables
- Good overview of budget process, great participatory format
- Interaction of tables
- 4 themes of the budget exercise
- Group discussions, clarifications from Councillors, visit to other tables
- Table discussions
- The overview of the budget process. The donut of revenue and expenditures
- Small group discussions
- Table discussions/Format
- Engaging, dynamic, well-organized.
- Talking with neighbours, fellow Ottawans
- Voting by colour at the end of the meeting
- Engaging and lively; great to know that our voices are being heard
- Table discussions, group vote
- Our discussion group worked well



- The adding to the city themes (caring, sustainable, prosperous, affordable)
- Great organization, great people at the table. Easy access to the venue by public transit
- Small group discussion
- Good try, but facilitators spent too much time explaining their issues/process. Cut into table time. Best part was 4 quadrants exercise
- Small groups
- Very useful to walk around other tables at the end
- Opportunity to speak and participate
- The explanations of the budget process
- Short and focused, small group discussions
- Small groups and tools. Good context of the info
- Group discussion
- Facilitators were good. Speed was good.
- Good sound system, voting cards good idea

6. What could be improved?

- Longer lead time
- Reduce number of topics - more sessions, or more focused sessions on specific interests of each city area
- More targeted discussions (affordable housing, ODSP, OW needs to be increased)
- Clearer objectives for each exercise
- More general explanations of the budget
- Use a sound system with more voltage (louder!) so the mics drown out the people who refuse to heed the call to "listen up". A bit facetious with that comment...
- Specific choices that are achievable at Council
- Too much paper for a 2 hour session. Ok to have take home, confusing to use at the tables. Good to hear from others.
- All work involved
- Less pushing for raising taxes
- Would love city staff here working WITH us
- Two or three clear courses of action we could take up front
- This was pretty experimental, it worked, keep it up to improve it!
- Site to download background material before the meeting
- More time to absorb budget details. Provide info sheets for each person, instead of 1 per table.
- More time, may consider a weekend date
- More time, materials in advance
- Ward by ward might be better. More time, more education
- Probably needs a bit more time
- Could do some more structured conversations about relative choices between budget areas
- More context, THEN clearer choices (simplify)
- Less stuff
- A 3 Billion\$ budget is too complicated to come up with solutions with very limited information
- Explanation of the "key recommendations" exercise
- Just keep doing these kinds of things. Somehow get a much better diversity of participation
- More time for groups...
- There was a lot of paper! Any other methods?
- The two hours flew by very quickly - more time could be allocated to allow more time for spirited discussions that ensued. Would suggest colour coding the various pieces of paper



- There was both too much and too little information. The objective of the 2 hours should be clearer and narrower.
- Less paper, simplified
- Delivery of presentation, which will come with practice. Presenters - please talk less
- A bit more on how we can continue to stay engaged i.e. what's the best way to influence council priorities generally
- Focus on things in detail - perhaps a few sessions
- The structure of the material provided was rather confusing
- Too few copies of materials, too densely written information rich fact sheets
- More time
- Ranking confuses budget priorities, and priorities for term of council. These are different actions (priorities for term of council may not cost much)
- Too much information for the time allotted (priorities exercise particularly poor)
- 1 copy of each document per table was NOT helpful. Very difficult to participate fully given limited info we had, and weird set-up of priorities
- Confusion between operating vs. Capital; this year's budget vs. Longer range priorities
- I think a different approach to participatory budgeting is needed. We should not have been presented with a set list of spending programs to rank. We should have had an opportunity to discuss broader policy options or questions. For ex. what should the city's budget try to achieve: equal opportunity for everyone? Equalization? And then go from there
- Get people together who are interested in the same issues
- Involving/Outreach to more diversity of community (youth, racialized)
- Paper chaos
- More detail on tradeoffs and what is in each category
- Minimizing the information and synthesizing
- More clarification on certain items
- Need to know dollars, not just percentages

7. Other ideas or comments

- Overall budget consultation following the planned session (?)
- My neighbour is not able to pay all of her rent (257 Lisgar) - could they offer rents geared to income in some units?
- Kudos to councillors who are breaking out of mouldy ways of doing things. Fresh air is good for our lungs!
- Good to hear ideas raised at other tables. Great to be open to discussion and to help challenge assumptions
- Great experiment - expand it!
- Keep it up!
- Yea, this needs to be a series of learning sessions like Budget 101 (City revenue 101, etc.). Great work... THANKS!
- This was great, good to see this kind of engagement both by the Councillors and the public
- Scope too big. Too ambitious in area covered
- Too much for 2 hours (-15 minutes late start)
- Agree we need more demographics - online is the future! (for youth, parents at home)
- Start this process well ahead of the next budget round - a worthwhile exercise
- Full day session with hard copies for the budget available. Should ask at the top of this form whether you are a homeowner or a renter, and perhaps range of how much people are paying in property tax (ie. Owner or renter, if you pay \$2500-\$4000, \$4000-6000)
- Interactive ipads
- I would participate in City's opportunities if I became much more informed



- Thank you for opportunity
- The subject was too vast and complex in a complex process
- Also, very good were the information pages on the Urban Forest, Public toilets in LRT and other important causes
- Focus was on expenditures. More conversation/time should be devoted to revenue sources and other options. Good first meeting
- No, THANK YOU!!!
- More- continue!
- Excellent work :)
- Great initiative, very important for democracy
- Maybe fewer pieces of paper?
- More information on the amount spent on roads, how to influence that part of the budget. Thanks for organizing!
- You can't ask people to rank items they have not defined in the first place - doesn't work
- Need more discussion and consultation. Need more info to help with decisions
- Thank you!
- Great initiative!
- Bilingualism much appreciated
- Too large a subject for 2 hours

