Good evening, everyone, and thank you to those joining us here in person and to those tuning in online.

I am Councillor Denise Rumbolt, and on behalf of the Finance Committee and the 14th Council, I am pleased to present the Town of Happy Valley–Goose Bay's 2027 Municipal Budget, balanced at **$21,154,632.95**.

Preparing a municipal budget is never an easy task. It requires careful consideration and planning. We must balance the needs of our community with the financial resources available to us, while remaining mindful of the impact those decisions have on our residents and businesses. This year's budget places a strong focus on maintaining essential services, investing in infrastructure, and planning responsibly for the future.

But before I get into the details, I would like to share **two important highlights.**

After years of discussion surrounding the need to replace our existing and now inadequate fire hall, **I am especially pleased to announce that the 2027 budget includes funding to move forward with a new Protective Services and Emergency Response Facility.** This is a significant step forward for our community and one that has been a long time coming. Our firefighters, municipal enforcement, animal control and emergency response personnel all provide an essential service, and it is important that they have a facility that supports the demands of the work they do. While there is still work ahead, we are moving beyond the planning stages and taking meaningful steps toward making this much-needed facility a reality. We are making continued investments in our Fire Department with the purchase of new bunker gear and self-contained breathing apparatus which will ensure our firefighters have the protective equipment they need to carry out their duties safely and we will introduce the First Due Web Responder system, which will improve emergency response planning, incident reporting, fire inspections, personnel management, and equipment tracking.

The second highlight speaks to something that affects many of our residents on a much more personal level. Council recognizes that the rising cost of living continues to place financial pressure on households throughout our community. With that in mind, and to ensure that programs designed to support those who need them most remain within reach, **we are increasing the income thresholds for our Low-Income Property Tax Relief Program by 15%.** This change will allow more residents to qualify for assistance and help ensure that this important program continues to serve those it was intended to support. These two investments reflect an important theme in this year's budget: **planning for the needs of tomorrow while remaining mindful of the challenges our residents face today.**

In supporting our municipal infrastructure, the 2027 budget includes several important projects that will help guide future development and strengthen the services we rely on every day. Reliable infrastructure is essential and taking the time to plan and invest wisely today can help us avoid more costly challenges down the road. A water supply study and landfill study will help us better understand our long-term needs and make informed decisions about future investments. We will also undertake design work for water transmission mains and sanitary sewer upgrades, improvements to storm drainage through detention systems and final upgrades to the D42 pumphouse will be completed.

Living in Labrador, we know all too well how important it is to be prepared for unexpected situations, particularly during our winter months. Having a reliable space available to support residents when they need it most is an investment in the safety and well-being of our community. For this reason, another important investment will be the purchase and installation of a generator at the Labrador Wellness Centre, allowing the facility to serve as a community warming centre during emergencies and extended power outages.

Of course, building a strong community is about more than infrastructure and essential services. It is also about creating and maintaining spaces where people can enjoy an active lifestyle. This year's budget includes continued improvements to our soccer field through the installation of fencing and a watering system, along with the purchase of landscaping equipment to help maintain our public spaces. At Kinsmen Park, a new hard-surface walkway will improve accessibility and make this popular space more enjoyable for residents and visitors alike. We will also move forward with the Kelland Drive walkway as part of the active transportation initiatives, creating additional opportunities for residents to walk and move safely throughout our community. Improvements to the ice plants at both the arena and curling club will help maintain the reliability of these well-used recreational facilities. We will also introduce a new advertising opportunity at our softball fields, providing local businesses with another avenue for promotion.

Looking ahead, Council is also taking steps to strengthen municipal operations and guide future growth. We anticipate adding staff positions to support capacity and growth. An organizational review will be undertaken to identify opportunities for improved efficiency and service delivery. We will also begin work toward updating the Town's Municipal Plan and Development Regulations for 2028. This is an important part of ensuring that future development is guided by thoughtful planning that reflects the needs and priorities of our community.

Of course, a municipal budget is not simply about where we spend money. It is also about how we generate the revenue necessary to provide the services our residents and businesses depend on. For 2027, there will be no changes to current business tax rates, and no increases to miscellaneous municipal rates, including compliance letters, tax certificates, building permits, and animal control fees. There will, however, be changes to the structure of property taxation. To align with the *Towns and Local Service Districts Act*, we will no longer be referring to our tax rate as a MIL rate. Commercial property taxation will introduce a base rate along with a reduced percentage rate, replacing the previous mil-rate structure. Residential property taxation will also introduce a base rate, along with different categories of residential properties subject to varying percentage rates. In addition, a base rate will be introduced for all vacant land, both residential and commercial.

Council remains mindful of the importance of balancing the revenue required to maintain municipal services with the financial realities facing our community. In addition to the enhanced Low-Income Property Tax Relief Program mentioned earlier, the seasonal recreational property tax rebate will continue, and updates to the discount policy for charitable and community organizations will help support the many groups that contribute to the well-being of our town.

As we look at the budget as a whole, we believe it reflects a practical approach to meeting our responsibilities today while preparing for the future. Not every investment will be immediately visible, and not every improvement will happen overnight. Some of the most important work we do involves planning, studying, and preparing for projects that may take years to fully develop. But that

work matters. It matters because the infrastructure we maintain, the services we provide, and the decisions we make today will help shape the community for future generations.

Before closing, I would like to acknowledge the efforts of our CAO, Nadine MacAulay, Director of Corporate Services, Vikram Malik, indeed all our Town staff, who make our jobs easier by providing their insight and guidance. Preparing a balanced budget requires a great deal of work and collaboration, and we sincerely appreciate the time and effort that goes into that process.

The 2027 Municipal Budget reflects our commitment to responsible financial management, essential infrastructure and thoughtful planning for the future, while recognizing the importance of affordability and fairness. We may not be able to accomplish everything at once, but we can continue making steady, meaningful progress.

Because at the end of the day, our responsibility is not simply to meet the needs of Happy Valley–Goose Bay today, but to make decisions that will serve our community well into the future.

Thank you.