



Public Feedback Received  
by noon on March 31, 2026  
2026/2027 Budget

# Feedback to 2026/2027 Budget Process

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Over the past several months, MODS has held two or three public consultations intended to gather input for the Strategic Plan. Participation in the first two sessions was extremely low—so low that the results were statistically insignificant—yet the process continued without adjustment. In the final consultation, no written report was produced; instead, we were told verbally that there had been “lots of valuable feedback.” Without documentation, this claim cannot be independently verified.

Even setting aside the poor quality of the data, a larger issue remains: the absence of traceability.

Residents are presumably a key audience for this process. To test the promised traceability, I selected the first item under Pillar 1 of the Strategic Plan - “Update Climate Action Plan” - and attempted to connect it to the budget spreadsheet. The closest match appears to be line item **00-26200-000 – Climate Action** for **\$77,250**. If this is indeed the corresponding project, the only information available to the public is a single dollar figure.

Compounding this, the Climate Action line item is highlighted in yellow, indicating that it is “immutable.” This effectively renders any public input on this item irrelevant.

Attempting to correlate other Strategic Plan items to the budget was equally unproductive. If this is what MODS considers “traceability,” then the process has not met its stated objectives.

We are now at or near the end of the budget cycle. What is being described as a “dynamic economic model” is, in practice, a spreadsheet containing hundreds of entries with no clear linkage to public feedback. Despite my best efforts, I could not unambiguously trace even one item back to the consultations.

We were assured that public input would be traceable down to the project level. Based on the materials provided, this commitment has not been fulfilled. There is no documented process that enables MODS to deliver on that promise. I feel it is just wishful thinking.

## Budget Meeting Format

The current structure of the budget meetings prevents any meaningful deliberation. Materials are not provided in advance, and the process consists of reading through more than 200 non-prioritized items while councillors are given only brief minutes to react. When this concern was previously raised, the response was essentially: “*This is how council does things.*”

Here is what the existing process amounts to:

- **The Process:** A long list is read aloud, line by line.
- **The Window:** Each item—often involving thousands or many tens of thousands of dollars—must be processed in a matter of a few minutes.
- **The Result:** A “stream-of-consciousness” budget discussion that evaporates the moment the meeting ends, leaving no space for thoughtful analysis or informed decision-making.

The overarching strategy appears to be *quantity over quality*. By presenting 200+ items without any prioritization, the process virtually guarantees that nothing receives the scrutiny it deserves.

The defense that “this is the way we've always done things” is not a valid justification for maintaining an inefficient process.

## Concerns Regarding Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The verbal commitment to “introduce KPIs in future quarterly reports” reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of how KPIs function in a professional project management environment. KPIs must be defined *before* a project begins (see Note below). They establish the baseline for success, guide decision-making, and provide the framework for accountability from day one. Attempting to create KPIs after a project is already underway defeats their purpose entirely.

As a reference point, even a basic search yields the following: Key Performance Indicators are established during the planning phase of a project. High-level success criteria may be identified during initiation, but detailed, measurable KPIs—covering scope, budget, schedule, and quality—are finalized during planning so they can serve as benchmarks throughout execution.

If MODS proceeds with project implementation without first defining KPIs, then we are deviating significantly from standard project management practices. In practical terms, this means we are not managing projects—we are improvising.

**Note:** [municipalityofshelburne.ca/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/2026.03.03\\_Budget-Meeting-Part-1.mp3](https://municipalityofshelburne.ca/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/2026.03.03_Budget-Meeting-Part-1.mp3) go to 11:20 mark where it is being proposed that KPIs are defined AFTER a project starts – 3 months after a project starts.

## What is a Project

During the budget meeting, the term “project” was used repeatedly. Yet what we were shown were simply line items in a spreadsheet, nothing resembling what would typically be recognized as a project in any professional environment.

Despite the frequent references to “projects,” there is no indication that a formal methodology or standardized template is being applied. In a professional setting, projects follow a consistent standardized framework. They include written milestones, defined deliverables, clear timelines, and documented gating factors that allow for oversight and accountability.

I sincerely hope MODS has such a methodology in place. However, based on what has been presented, there is no evidence of a reliable, reproducible project management process. Without one, we are not managing projects— again, we are improvising.

## Long-Range Projections

The use of spreadsheets projecting 15 years into the future is, at best, highly ambitious. Long-term forecasting can make sense for predictable, slowly depreciating assets—such as a bridge—where the lifecycle is well understood. But in this case, *every* line item is projected out 15 years. Even routine operational costs, such as janitorial services, are extended across a decade and a half.

This suggests that the projections are being driven by the structure of the spreadsheet rather than by common-sense financial planning. Filling out cells simply because a macro requires it does not constitute meaningful forecasting.

## Conclusion

As we near the end of this multi-month budgeting process, we are left with a spreadsheet containing hundreds of items—an extensive compilation that reflects a great deal of work. But the purpose of this effort is not simply to gather information; it is to create clarity.

At this stage, it is reasonable to expect that the process would allow council to answer a basic question: **What are the top three items in the budget?**

If we cannot identify those with confidence, it suggests the process is not giving us the visibility we need. A budgeting framework should help illuminate our highest priorities so that decision-making becomes clearer, not more complicated. When the most fundamental elements remain difficult to pinpoint, it becomes challenging for council to make informed, strategic choices.

This is not a criticism of the effort invested, but an invitation to reflect on whether the methodology is serving us as effectively as it could. A well-designed process should highlight what matters most. If, after months of work, we still struggle to identify the top three items in the budget, then it may be time to consider adjustments that better support clarity, transparency, and sound governance.