



SUBJECT: Financial status report as at March 31, 2022

TO: Corporate Services, Strategy, Risk & Accountability Cttee.

FROM: Finance Department

Report Number: F-21-22

Wards Affected: All

File Numbers: 100-1

Date to Committee: May 4, 2022

Date to Council: May 17, 2022

Recommendation:

Receive and file finance department report F-21-22, financial status report as at March 31, 2022.

PURPOSE:

Vision to Focus Alignment:

- Deliver customer centric services with a focus on efficiency and technology transformation

Background and Discussion:

PART A - FINANCIAL POSITION

In 2020, the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic caused great volatility in the global and Canadian economy. The initial reaction of the Bank of Canada saw the lowering of interest rates from 1.75% to 0.25%. The interest rate cuts were delivered to support economic activity and keep inflation low and stable. For the City, these interest rate cuts had a negative impact on the ability to generate interest income throughout 2020 and 2021. This required greater reliance on the ability to trade investments for capital gains to meet budget. The economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic has stumbled into 2022 with compounding complexities that are adding to the struggle to maintain investment income. Record high inflation, potential sharp interest rate hikes and geopolitical tensions have crippled bond prices. This has limited the ability of

capital gains to be recognized during the first quarter of 2022. Staff are continuing to monitor and assess market conditions within their capacity. Expectation for these trends to continue through 2022 is likely which will put additional strain on the City's ability to meet its investment budget.

If current market conditions persist investment income could face a potential unfavourable position for year-end in the range noted below:

	Projected December 2022	Actual December 2021
Total Interest	3,805,504	3,816,574
Budget	5,300,000	5,300,000
Favourable/(Unfavourable) Variance	(1,494,496)	(1,483,426)
Capital Gains (estimate range)	500,000 – 1,000,000	1,788,391
Favourable/(Unfavourable) Variance	(994,496) – (494,496)	304,965

The attached Appendix A shows investment income (interest earned, and capital gains realized) to March 31, 2022 on the total investment portfolio. The overall investment portfolio has increased \$1.9M from the previous year.

Investment income as of March 31, 2022, has decreased compared to prior year. As noted above, economic conditions in Q1 of 2022 have significantly decreased prices in the bond market. This has limited the ability for trades to be made to realize capital gains.

Appendix B provides a listing of the current portfolio by type of investment, and weighted average yield, in accordance with the Ontario Regulation 438/97. In following the City of Burlington's investment policy, the City can purchase Region of Halton bonds, up to but not greater than, the amount of the debenture issued on behalf of the City. As of March 31, 2022, the City's investment portfolio included \$15.2 million Region of Halton bonds.

As at March 31, 2022, the City's investment portfolio is compliant with the guidelines set out in the City's investment policy and goals adopted by the City.

PART B - PROPERTY TAX COLLECTION

The City of Burlington collects property taxes for the city, Region of Halton and the Halton Boards of Education as legislated under the *Municipal Act, 2001*. Appendix C reflects the property tax status at March 31, 2022 compared to March 31, 2021. The 2022 total levy, which represents interim billing with due dates of February 22 and April 22, is \$220.9 million compared to \$216.5 million in 2021.

Collections for the current taxation year are 56.3%, which is consistent with prior years as highlighted in the chart below and detailed in Appendix C.

As at March 31	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Current year Collections	56.3%	56.5%	55.7%	55.5%	55.6%	56.1%
Current year Outstanding*	43.7%	43.5%	44.3%	44.5%	44.4%	43.9%

*includes installments not yet due

Overdue property tax notices are sent four times per year to aid in collections. In addition to the overdue notices, tax collection letters are sent to owners with arrears in both the current year and two previous years. In 2021, due to the ongoing pandemic, these letters were sent in July. Property owners were provided with a deadline to pay the oldest year of arrears by December 31, 2021.

A property title search was conducted in January on 42 accounts that remained three years in arrears and lenders were notified. This has resulted in 40 accounts being paid. For the 2 properties that remain three years in arrears, a tax arrears certificate will be registered against title in the second quarter, as permitted under the *Municipal Act, 2001*. Staff will continue to try and work with the property owners over the upcoming year to arrange payment or extension agreements.

On January 11, in response to the on-going Covid-19 pandemic, City Council approved a new 2022 Covid-19 Property Tax Payment Plan. The program allows eligible property owners who are unable to pay their property taxes by the regularly scheduled due dates to make payments under a pre-authorized payment plan, including arrears dating back to March 2020. The plan allows for a start date between March 1 and July 1 with property taxes being paid in full by December 1, 2022. As of March 31, 64 applications have been received. As well, penalty was waived for the February 22 due date to assist taxpayers who received their 2022 Interim bill late as a result of staffing impacts at Canada Post.

The city continues to offer its three regular pre-authorized payment plans which provide a convenient and reliable payment method for property owners. Approximately one third (22,000) of all property accounts are enrolled in these pre-authorized payment plans.

The Chief Financial Officer provides council with a monthly slide deck update on financials and property tax collection, with the most recent update on April 6, 2022.

PART C - DEBT AND FINANCIAL OBLIGATION LIMIT

Debt Capacity: As of March 31, 2022, the City's total debt charges as a percentage of own source revenue is estimated to be 10.4%, which is below the council approved guideline of 12.5%, and below the provincial limit of 25%. (See Appendix D). Further, the city has an estimated \$74.8 million in total principal debt outstanding. Taking into consideration principal debt repayments of \$14.1 million, as well as \$40.6 million in debt which has been approved and not issued, total city principal debt outstanding at year end 2022 is forecasted at approximately \$101.3 million.

The reported debt capacity and forecasted principal debt outstanding are based on a snapshot at March 31, as such debt approved by Council after this date, will impact these figures. Any changes will be reported within the next quarterly update.

The city's debt is monitored on a regular basis, and debt capacity is projected based on debt that is retiring, debt approved (issued and to be issued), as well the capital forecast debt requirements. Any in-year debt approvals beyond what is included in the city's capital program will be reflected in an updated debt capacity. It is important to note that debt capacity changes from one year to the next, and capacity in one year is not necessarily indicative of the forecasted trend.

Debt Charges: The city's budget for debt charges is \$8.5 million, and as of March 31, this budget meets the planned needs of debt repayments in 2022.

2022 Debt Issuance: The Region is planning to proceed with its annual debt issuance in Q2-2022, on behalf of the City. Information on the issue will be included within the next quarterly update on the city's debt position.

PART D - RESERVES AND RESERVE FUNDS

Reserves and reserve funds are an essential element of the City's long-term financial plan. They allow the City to set aside funds for a future purpose and fulfil a critical financial need for the municipality. They make provisions for the replacement and rehabilitation of existing City assets, provide a contingency for one-time and unforeseeable events, and provide flexibility to manage debt levels and protect the City's financial position.

Stabilization Reserves and Reserve Funds

Stabilization reserves are used to offset extraordinary and unforeseen expenditure requirements, one-time expenditures, cyclical expenses, revenue shortfalls and they help to minimize fluctuations in the tax levy.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contingency • Severe Weather • Tax Rate Stabilization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Fee Stabilization • Engineering Fee Stabilization • Commodity Stabilization
<p>Target Balance of consolidated stabilization reserves and reserve funds (excluding building permit) is 10-15% of city's own source revenues. Based on 2020 own source revenues of \$224 million the target range is: \$22.4 million to \$33.6 million</p>	
<p>March 31, 2022 <i>Uncommitted Balance</i>: \$24,724,994 → Currently at 11.0% of Target</p>	

As part of the City's reserve and reserve fund policies the city sets a target balance for consolidated stabilization reserve funds (excluding Building Permit) at 10-15% of the City's own source revenues. It is important to note that the target is based on the City's uncommitted balance as an accurate depiction of funding available for future use. The cash balance includes funds approved by council to be spent on specific initiatives and therefore are not available for future spending. The City is currently at 11.0% which is at the low end of the City's target range of 10-15%.

The severe weather reserve fund is used to alleviate the impact of unforeseen fluctuations in costs associated with severe weather events. The City's policy with respect to this reserve fund is highlighted below.

Stabilization Reserve Fund	Recommended Balance	March 31 Uncommitted Balance
Severe Weather Reserve Fund	<p>A minimum balance of 25% of the five-year average of winter maintenance costs, this equates to \$1,134,085.</p> <p>Target balance equal to one year's expenditure requirements (2022) = \$5,845,956.</p>	\$5,339,363

As per the policy the balance in the reserve fund exceeds the minimum balance requirement, however, is less than the target balance by approximately \$0.507 million.

Building Permit Stabilization Reserve Fund

The building permit stabilization reserve fund is used to stabilize building permit revenues and expenditures, which can vary from year to year based on development activity levels in accordance with Bill 124.

Corporate Reserve Funds	Recommended Balance		March 31 Uncommitted Balance
Building Permit Stabilization	The reserve fund is capped at 163% of direct costs.	Total direct costs for 2020 were approximately \$3.6 million. Based on this the upset balance for the reserve fund is \$5.9 million.	\$2.9 million

Capital Reserve Funds

Capital reserve funds form a vital component of any Capital Financing Plan and are used extensively by the City in financing the capital program for maintenance and replacement of existing infrastructure to maintain assets in a state of good repair and the construction/purchase of infrastructure to service the growing community.

Capital Reserve Funds	Recommended Balance		March 31 Uncommitted Balance
Vehicle and Equipment Reserve Funds	The target balance for the consolidated capital reserve fund balance is a minimum of 2% of the asset replacement value.	The City's 2021 Asset Management Plan has total asset replacement value at approximately \$5.18 billion. Based on this amount the recommended balance is \$104 million .	\$26.9 million
Parks & Recreation Infrastructure Reserve Funds			
Transit Related Reserve Funds			
Other Capital Reserve Funds			

Corporate Reserve Funds

Corporate reserve funds provide for various contingent and potential future liabilities. The City budgets annually for the current year costs expected to be incurred from these liabilities but does not budget for the estimated future liability. The impact of post-employment benefit expenses is communicated annually as part of the financial statements.

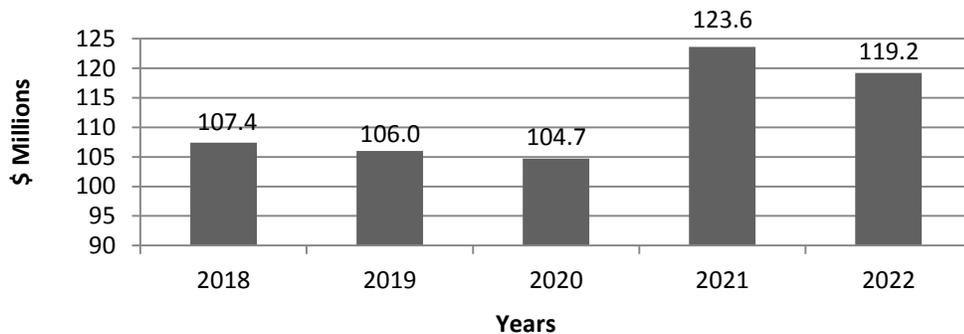
Corporate Reserve Funds	2021 Actuarial Valuation Liability	March 31 Uncommitted Balance
Employee Accident	\$12.4 million	\$5.3 million
Benefits	\$15.9 million	\$4.4 million

The status of the City's Reserves and Reserve Funds balances are disclosed in Appendix E.

At March 31, 2022, the total of the reserve and reserve fund balances amounted to \$176.9 million, which is \$10.3 million lower than the corresponding figure of \$187.2 million at March 31, 2021. Contributing to the decrease is the timing of capital project allocations and receipt of funding from Burlington Hydro and the Canada Community Building Fund (formerly Federal Gas Tax).

Of the total Reserves and Reserve Funds \$57.7 million is committed for various projects leaving an uncommitted balance of \$119.2 million. The commitments represent expenditures approved by Council or funds held for specific future purposes. The following chart provides a historical perspective of uncommitted reserve and reserve fund balances as at March 31:

Uncommitted Reserve and Reserve Fund Balances as at March 31



PART E - 2022 BUDGET MONITORING

March 31st budget performance will be provided as part of the monthly COVID update to Corporate Services, Strategy, Risk and Accountability Committee on May 4^h.

PART F - Financial Position

The financial status report provides information on significant balances on the City's statement of financial position. Information is provided on the City's short- and long-term investments and cash balances. Information is also provided on taxes receivable. The reserve fund balances contain obligatory reserve funds which are shown as deferred revenue on the City's statement of financial position. Our net long-term liabilities are discussed in the section on debt and financial obligation limits. Significant balances are as follows:

As at March 31st

(Amounts are in thousands of dollars)

	2022	2021
	\$	\$
Cash & temporary investments	48,735	84,436
Taxes receivable*	103,478	101,476
Long term investments	267,576	230,015
Investment in Burlington Hydro Electric**	140,000	137,693
Deferred revenue - obligatory reserve funds	34,195	35,978
Net long-term liabilities	74,826	81,982

*** Reported net of allowance for write-offs**

**** 2022 balance is as at December 31, 2021**

The City's statement of financial position provides a long-term view of the City's financial health. A year over year comparison helps to identify indicators that may be of concern or interest. As of March 31, 2022, the significant balance changes include:

- Decrease in cash and temporary investments and increase in long-term investments which are addressed in Part A of the report. Staff continue to monitor these balances daily and will report to Council on a regular basis.

Financial Matters:

Not applicable.

Total Financial Impact

Not applicable.

Source of Funding

Not applicable.

Other Resource Impacts

Not applicable.

Climate Implications

Not applicable.

Conclusion:

To present the financial status of the City as at March 31, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

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Appendices:

- a. Securities Position and Performance
- b. Investment Portfolio
- c. Property Tax Collection
- d. Debt and Financial Obligation Limit
- e. Reserve Funds and Reserves

Report Approval:

All reports are reviewed and/or approved by Department Director, the Chief Financial Officer and the Executive Director of Legal Services & Corporation Counsel.