

Quinte West Strategic Plan

Final DRAFT

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Introduction

The City of Quinte West began operation on January 1, 1998 as a result of the amalgamation of the City of Trenton, the Townships of Murray and Sidney, and the Village of Frankford.

Quinte West is home to Canadian Forces Base Trenton and 8 Wing. CFB Trenton is one of Canada's premier military installations serving the nation's needs at home and across the globe. As the City's single largest employer the Base is a key ingredient in the City's economic and social well-being.

Quinte West has a significant waterfront on the Bay of Quinte and is the gateway to the Trent Severn Waterway, which touches all four wards of the community. The municipality includes a mix of agriculture and urban development with a diverse industrial base covering such areas: aerospace; food processing; medical supply; metal fabrication and automotive part production.

Under the leadership of a 13-member Council, the City of Quinte West provides services to a population of over 42,800 residents. The City of Quinte West has a budget of approximately \$55 million and employs approximately 250 full time staff, plus 124 volunteer fire fighters.

City Services

The Corporation of the City of Quinte West provides five major types of services to the public:

- **CAO's Office**
 - Recreation facilities
 - Recreation programs
 - Economic development
 - Business retention and attraction
- **Corporate and financial services**
 - Business and lottery licensing
 - Dog licensing and enforcement
 - Marriage licenses, birth registrations
 - Council support
 - Taxation
 - Budget development and monitoring

- **Fire services**
 - Fire prevention
 - Fire suppression
- **Planning and development services**
 - Official plan, secondary plan, zoning by-law development and administration
 - Review of development applications
 - Issuing of building permits
 - By-law enforcement
- **Public works and environmental services**
 - Road construction and maintenance
 - Storm water systems
 - Municipal water and sewage services
 - Waste management
 - Park operation and maintenance
 - Protective (Police) Services
 - Contracted with the Ontario Provincial Police

About the strategic plan

Quinte West's first strategic plan was approved in March, 1999, more than 10 years ago when the city was first amalgamated. Many of the initiatives in that first plan have been achieved, and in the fall of 2009, Council determined that a new strategic plan was required to set a course for the municipality over the next five years.

New objectives and initiatives are required to deal with the issues and capitalize on the opportunities facing Quinte West today and into the future. Long-range planning combined with ongoing business planning is essential to ensure Quinte West has the resources and the time required to overcome barriers and achieve its priorities.

This plan sets forth a vision and initiatives that require bold action for the municipality to realize its full potential. It incorporates significant planning to ensure Quinte West is able to secure funding from other levels of government and attract the partnerships necessary to build on its strengths and overcome its weaknesses. It is a targeted, action-oriented practical plan that is necessary for Quinte West to position itself to compete effectively with other municipalities for jobs, growth, prosperity and attention. It seeks

to maximize value for taxpayers, recognize the limitations of the property tax base while at the same time “thinks big” with the plans to get there.

How the plan was developed

This plan was developed between November 2009 and April 2010.

A total of 23 interviews with the Mayor, each Councillor, members of the senior staff and representatives from QEDC and CFB Trenton were conducted in December 2009 after a review of written and other secondary source materials.

The results of those interviews and background research were compiled into an Interim Report and used to develop a community consultation process that took place in March 2010. Four consultation sessions were held over two days, March 9th and 11th at City Hall and in Batawa respectively. Invitation letters to key community groups were sent out three weeks in advance of the consultations and newspaper advertisements were placed in the local newspaper two weeks ahead of the planning sessions. A news release encouraging residents to attend was released in the week prior to the consultations. Approximately 30 residents participated. All notices also promoted the availability of an online strategic consultation on the city’s website throughout March which garnered a further dozen responses.

Participants in the strategic planning process provided input into:

- A vision for the municipality;
- The values that should underpin its decision-making;
- An assessment of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats;
- A Strategic Directions review; and
- Wide-ranging discussions on goals and initiatives.

All the information was collated and synthesized to develop the Draft Plan.

Overview of findings

Participants in the strategic planning process expressed a desire for a vision that balances the need to continue to build the collective identity of Quinte West while at the same time recognizing the particular strengths and attributes of both its rural and urban communities.

They see a community with the strengths of location at the mouth of the Trent-Severn Waterway in the Bay of Quinte; located between the major centres of Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal where the nation’s largest air base is located. They see energetic municipal leadership that has made significant progress over the last several years to develop its

downtowns, bring new recreational opportunities to residents and build community spirit and identity. They see a community with deep agricultural roots and a quality of life that has wide appeal.

Participants recognized that Quinte West is only a dozen years old and still struggles at times with the division between urban and rural priorities, its collective identity both inside the municipality and from a recognition standpoint outside the municipality. A number of participants expressed concern about the negative impact of still living with some of the divisions of the four founding municipalities. Not everyone agreed as to the problems that poses, but virtually all recognized the importance of the collective identity and integration that is necessary if the municipality is to reach its full potential.

They also recognized that more needs to be done to give young people and families the opportunities to live and prosper in their home town, and they see a community, like so many across this country, that is dealing with an economy in transition.

Many of the same components identified as strengths of the municipality were also seen as its best opportunities, with a desire to focus on goals and priorities that will bring economic development, growth and prosperity to residents and the municipality, an improved quality of life with realistic expectations to ensure affordability to taxpayers.

The Strategic Plan

Vision

The vision a community sets for itself speaks to the quality of life it aspires to for all its residents. The vision sets out the destination to be reached together as a community and is grounded in the reality of where it is, where it starts, and the potential it offers.

Quinte West is a community united in the common purpose to bring prosperity to its residents, with a quality of life and opportunity that attracts visitors, new residents and businesses alike to share and enjoy the variety of lifestyles it offers, its unique sense of country and the natural beauty and abundance that defines it as the Gateway to the Trent Severn Waterway.

Values

The values of a municipality are the underlying beliefs that shape its attitude and approach to everything it does. They underpin all decision-making and act as the common principles that the community can count on as the municipality works to overcome challenges and seize opportunities necessary to fulfill its vision. These values provide assurance of the manner with which the municipality treats its residents both individually and collectively.

Strategic planning participants recognized the importance of having community values that stress:

- *Accountability, Transparency and Integrity* in everything we do
- *Vibrant, Enthusiastic and Innovative* to find new opportunities and meet them with optimism
- *Proactive, Competitive and Committed* to overcome the challenges we face
- *Communication, Consultation and Respect* to work together in common purpose

Strategic Directions

Strategic directions provide direction and context to meet the key challenges facing the municipality. Four key strategic directions were identified:

1. Continually improve the corporate management of the municipality
2. Create a solid foundation for jobs and economic prosperity
3. Ensure the municipality is in a strong financial position
4. Continue to build community identity and pride
5. Improve overall quality of life for residents

Strategic Direction 1

Continually improve the corporate management of the municipality

Goal: • **Build a framework for operational transformation**

- Initiatives:**
- Engage staff from all levels for problem-solving, opportunities and initiatives identification
 - Provide training resources to break down barriers to learning
 - Centralize training resources
 - Set up mechanisms to gauge public and customer satisfaction
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Goal: • **Broaden transparency and accountability through improved communications and consultation**

- Initiatives:**
- Develop and publicly release a detailed Quinte West annual report including a financial statement, progress on Strategic Plan implementation, key performance indicators, etc.
 - Identify successes as well as areas needing more attention
 - Develop a condensed version for wide distribution to residents
 - Develop and implement an annual pre-budget community consultation program
 - Continually expand/enhance consultation over length of strategic planning period
 - Develop a regular online consultation section of the City's website
 - Have ongoing community consultations on key items of Council Business
 - Regularly promote the consultations to the public
 - Consider including a "Results" component to the Consultation section so residents can see the outcome of the consultation
 - Consider developing a regular Council Update for the community
 - Explore cost/feasibility of Updates after each Council meeting
 - Explore the creation of a quarterly Council Newsletter
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discussing which could include columns from each Councilor, upcoming consultations, Council initiatives etc.

- Explore feasibility of hard copy and email versions
- Explore regularizing annual or semi-annual “Meet Your Councilor” events/receptions
- Assess feasibility of “customer satisfaction surveys” once or twice per Council term, using random sample scientific polling

Goal: • **Align Council business with Council’s approved strategic plan**

- Initiatives:**
- Implement an ongoing series of Council Business Planning meetings to ensure the work of Council aligns with Council’s Strategic Plan priorities
 - Establish key performance indicators to effectively measure success of strategic plan implementation
 - Ensure Staff Reports to Council identify the link between the report and Council’s Strategic Plan

Goal: • **Engrain identified Values as part of the Quinte West municipal brand**

- Initiatives:**
- Provide communications/customer service training to front-line staff who deal with the public on how to translate values into action and communicate the brand.
 - Create a Brand filter/values checklist – a tool that can be used by elected and non-elected officials to ensure decisions are aligned with values.
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Strategic Direction 2

Create a solid foundation for jobs and economic prosperity

Goal: Make key infrastructure investments to enable growth

- Initiatives:**
- Conduct a Community Impact Assessment on the impact of the expansion of CFB Trenton, waterfront redevelopment, initiatives to attract new permanent and seasonal residents and other initiatives detailed in this strategy.
 - Develop a long-range capital investment plan based on the Community Impact Assessment for infrastructure that is consistent with Strategic Direction 3 which is to ensure the municipality has a strong financial position.
 - Develop a community consultation/communications program to gather public input on long range prioritizing of infrastructure projects
 - Prioritize infrastructure requirements.
 - Develop a plan for senior government funding of municipal infrastructure identified in the Community Impact Assessment and required as a result of expansion of the CFB Trenton.
 - Provide employment lands with access to strategic transportation corridors and other transportation facilities.
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Goal: Support existing businesses and industry

- Initiatives:**
- Expand the “shop local” campaign.
 - Develop public relations campaign promoting Quinte West success stories in both trade and consumer media, locally, regionally and in major markets.
 - Continue downtown revitalization including:
 - Exploring expropriation of key pieces of undeveloped or underdeveloped property for development that further facilitates revitalization of the downtown; and
 - Exploring options to encourage usage of vacant downtown property.
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- Explore the creation of an “Expeditor” role inside the municipality to: liaise between the City and industry, assist with funding applications, problem-solve, etc.
 - Establish regularized meetings with industry to identify and deal with issues and opportunities
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Goal: **Develop a plan to expand Quinte West’s industrial base by targeting industry sectors where Quinte West has a strategic advantage**

- Initiatives:**
- Work with the Quinte Manufacturers Association and QEDC to develop and implement a series of marketing plans that focus on key industries where Quinte West has a strategic advantage such as food-processing, agri-business, aviation, national defence, green energy, clean water (new provincial initiative). As part of this:
 - Conduct additional market research to identify gaps in Quinte West’s industrial offering in key market segments and develop strategies to fill the gaps;
 - Create a unique selling proposition to attract new manufacturing industries to Quinte West;
 - Work with Provincial and Federal governments, and Canadian Consulates to ensure Quinte West has exposure to industrial expansion opportunities that meet its strategic advantage;
 - Identify uses for vacant industrial land.
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Goal: **Benefit from our tourism opportunities**

- Initiatives:**
- Develop a harbour/waterfront master plan integrated with the downtown Trenton master plan including:
 - A residential and commercial component;
 - Ensuring public access to the waterfront; and
 - Consideration of public-private partnerships for financing.
 - Develop a Trent Severn Waterway master plan for the entire length of the river in the municipality including a mix of development lands, trails and green space.
 - Contact other communities along the Trent Severn Waterway to:
 - Explore joint marketing/tourism infrastructure development
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initiatives; and

- Explore developing additional tourism and recreation activities along the Waterway.
- Work with tourism marketing organizations to develop/update plans to attract tourists.
- Identify opportunities to work with the Regional Tourism Office when it is established in the region.
- Explore expanding marketing partnership opportunities.
- Consider an annual promotion that will highlight the Trent Severn Waterway and bring visitors from Toronto, Ottawa and other centres to the community.
- Build a relationship with Parks Canada, which operates the Trent Severn Waterway.

Goal: Expand on municipal strengths to attract permanent leisure lifestyle/ and retirement residents

- Initiatives:**
- Conduct an analysis of similar sized communities that have been successful attracting retirees/leisure lifestyle residents. These residents bring wealth and disposable income into the community without the requiring jobs.
 - Design and implement marketing campaign to attract leisure lifestyle developers.
 - Design and implement marketing campaign to attract retirees, leisure lifestyle residents.

Goal: Assess Green Energy Opportunities

- Initiatives:**
- Explore facilitating the development of hydroelectric operations at weirs along the river in Quinte West including:
 - Discussing the concept with Parks Canada; and
 - Identifying and contacting potential hydroelectric developers with expertise in projects of a similar nature to assess feasibility.
 - Build an inventory of wind and solar energy opportunities.
 - Identify potential green energy developers and develop a marketing plan to attract investment.

Strategic Direction 3

Ensure the municipality is in a strong financial position

Goal: Define what is meant by a strong financial position

- Initiatives:**
- Review municipalities of similar size to Quinte West.
 - Benchmark Quinte West against other municipalities of similar size in terms of reserves, levels of taxation, infrastructure, debt-load, etc.
 - Define what a strong financial position means in Quinte West based on comparable municipalities and needs of Quinte West as detailed in this strategic plan, both short and long-term.
 - Visit and invite elected and Non-elected Officials from municipalities with a strong track record of financial management to learn from their best practices
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Goal: Bring tax and spending policies in line with the definition of a strong financial position through the development and maintenance of a long-term fiscal plan

- Initiatives:**
- Review current policies and practices to ensure that they are consistent with the definition of maintaining a strong financial position and achieving the strategic objectives of this plan including:
 - Long-term financing and alternative borrowing methods;
 - The cap on debt as a percentage of budget;
 - Development charges;
 - User fees; and
 - Pre-determined level of general reserves.
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Goal: Fully realize economies of scale from amalgamation

- Initiatives:**
- Look at further economies of scale where savings could be found since amalgamation
 - Conduct community consultation to receive input into future savings options.
 - Develop and implement a long-term operational efficiencies plan
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Goal: Maximize funding opportunities from other levels of government

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- Initiatives:**
- Identify government programs at provincial and federal levels that offer support to various initiatives detailed in this strategy.
 - Develop plans to submit applications and obtain funds.
 - Engage in ongoing Government Relations at both the Provincial and Federal levels of government to ensure Quinte West is a “top of mind” municipality for funding projects
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Goal: Expand partnerships with neighbouring municipalities

- Initiative:**
- Identify integration opportunities with other municipalities and organizations to find cost-savings for taxpayers and to leverage available resources.
 - Formalize multi-jurisdictional municipal group.
 - Assess opportunities for more collective buying in the region.
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Goal: Ensure Council has all the information it needs to keep fully apprised of the municipality’s financial circumstances

- Initiative:**
- Develop financial reporting tools for Council
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Strategic Direction 4

Continue to build community identity, awareness and pride

Goal: Bring community residents together

- Initiatives:**
- Develop a signature community event (or series of events) focused on celebrating the City of Quinte West itself such as a bicycle tour of the entire municipality.
 - Build community consultation components into all planning initiatives to ensure broad community buy-in.
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Goal: Eliminate imbalances in services and tax rates in various parts of the community

- Initiatives:**
- Identify imbalances in services and tax rates in various parts of the municipality.
 - Establish a timetable for resolving imbalances where justified.
 - Communicate the initiative to residents.
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Goal: Raise awareness of Quinte West as a community and not just a name

- Initiative:**
- Raise awareness of the name and position of Quinte West in media and communities outside Quinte West.
 - Package together all initiatives that re-inforce the position within this strategic plan into a communications strategy and communicate that strategy to key audiences

Strategic Direction 5

Improve overall quality of life for residents

Goal: Bring cable and high-speed, broadband internet access to all residents of Quinte West

- Initiatives:**
- Identify government programs available to assist.
 - Develop partnerships with area municipalities, and interested NGOs.
 - Identify and contact potential suppliers.
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Goal: Capitalize on our urban and rural strengths in order to make Quinte West a sustainable community

- Initiatives:**
- Develop land use patterns in the urban areas that are compact and avoid the need for unnecessary and uneconomical expansion of infrastructure.
 - Protect rural and agricultural areas by maintaining firm urban boundaries.
 - Direct new development to urban and hamlet areas to create a compact form and utilize existing resources.
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Goal: Design a people/family friendly municipality

- Initiatives:**
- Develop an integrated trail network that links to other jurisdictions and incorporates public spaces, as well as motorized, cycling and walking mobility modes.
 - Develop and implement a comprehensive beautification strategy that includes arterial routes throughout the municipality and all exits, north and south, from Highway 401.
 - Explore innovative transit options that incorporate more of the municipality.
 - Ensure the Official Plan review incorporates people/family friendly policies
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Goal: Ensure the health and safety of residents

- Continue community policing initiatives.
 - Identify opportunities to establish an Urgent Care facility and/or
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other healthcare clinics.

- Implement strategies to secure such facilities including Provincial government relations program.
 - Continue initiatives to attract new doctors to Quinte West.
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