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# HALDIMAND COUNTY

## Memorandum CAO-M01-2025 Term of Council Priorities Update For Consideration by Council in Committee on February 4, 2025

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**To:** Mayor Bentley and Members of Council  
**From:** Cathy Case, Chief Administrative Officer

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT Memorandum CAO-M01-2025 Term of Council Priorities Update be received.

The adoption of Term of Council Priority Initiatives is a key tool to maintain strategic organizational focus, to manage workload to the resources available and to continue to move the County forward by prioritizing key items that add significant value to the community and the corporation. The tool also provides a vehicle for Council to be able to communicate its major directions to community stakeholders. The implementation of the 2022-2026 Term of Council Corporate Priorities assists in fulfilling the County's stated purpose of improving the quality of life in Haldimand County through the responsible delivery of local services and programs. This strategic approach allows a more holistic perspective and forms the basis of the County's long term financial planning framework.

Council approved their 2022-2026 Term of Council Corporate Priorities program outlining the priorities as well as their timing during the Council Term, as shown in Attachment #1. In general the program continues to be implemented within the timeframes targeted, with some projects slightly delayed due to the challenges and competing priorities for staff resources associated with staff vacancies, retirements and recruitment challenges, and other unexpected circumstances.

The purpose of this report is to present Council with details of the progress made on key strategic priorities that were set for the current term, highlighting achievements, ongoing initiatives, potential challenges and any necessary adjustments to the priorities based on current circumstances.

Attachment #1 outlines the measures taken to implement the priorities over the past year, the original timeline and additional notes identifying the current status of each project. Projects of particular note are outlined below:

#### **1. The Core Business Software Project**

Upgrades to the County's key core technology systems continue, allowing for better, more integrated information and efficiencies across the organization once fully implemented.

This critical project initially focused on the County's core financial software and this phase of the project was completed in the Fall of 2024 with a final update to Council at that time. The successful completion of this phase, including a revised and modernized account structure, has put the County in a better position with respect to financial reporting and updated and prepared other software modules to be adequately integrated with the County's financial system both now and into the future. Process mapping was also completed, generating recommendations for future enhancements

The focus on a human resource information system, payroll and other applications that will offer efficiencies in people management within the County was intended to begin following completion of the financial software updates and was slated for an 18 month timeframe to completion. This component

was slightly delayed beginning, but is now underway with the implementation of electronic time entry. The project continues to work towards HR digital improvements and is expected to be complete by the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter in 2026.

The Asset Management component of the project was also intended to follow the completion of the financial component. The start was delayed slightly from initial expectations but began in Q4 of 2024 with an 18 month timeframe until completion. This component of the overall core software implementation will see the introduction of an integrated electronic work order system which will allow key metrics to be obtained to create base lines and reporting metrics on service delivery within the County.

These projects were planned based on coordinated timelines but the onset of the financial component was slightly delayed due to key vacancies in staffing. This has a ripple effect on the other components, however the overall project is expected to be completed within the current term of Council.

## **2. Economic Development Strategy**

A priority of Council was to investigate the feasibility of a business park located in North Caledonia near the Hwy 6 corridor and the John C Munro Hamilton International Airport. The first phase of the project saw a review of market sector targets, land use capabilities and a servicing strategy related to a concept plan for the area. This phase was completed and approved through Council in September of 2023. Phase two, completed in October 2024, involved a financial analysis resulting in various business plan options and associated mitigation strategies, with Council selecting an option and directing public feedback. Phase three is in progress and includes identifying opportunities to raise the profile of the subject employment area both domestically and internationally building on the target sector analysis; and, providing an outline and general direction for a marketing strategy as it relates to targeting, promoting and attracting development to the future employment area. Phase three is expected to be completed in 2025.

## **3. Norfolk/Six Nations Water Supply Project**

Staff from Haldimand, Six Nations and Norfolk continue to work diligently on moving this project forward and are ready to proceed once funding can be secured by upper levels of government. Staff and members of Council from each of the three organizations continue to meet with provincial representatives to seek financial assistance with this critical water project that will supply water from the Haldimand owned Nanticoke Water Treatment Plant to Norfolk and Six Nations borders. The project will allow Norfolk to increase development opportunities and will allow Six Nations to continue water transmission lines into the Six Nations Territory to address critical water insecurity issues. Unfortunately, to date the provincial and federal governments have not committed funding directly to this project despite respective goals of housing growth and indigenous water security. Until such time as funding is received, the project, although ready to advance, is in jeopardy of being viable. Staff will continue to work in partnership with Six Nations and Norfolk County, advocating to upper levels of government for financial support to advance this project.

## **4. Major Recreational Facilities Needs and Implementation Strategy**

In December, 2024 Council approved a strategy and implementation framework that will assist in future planning and decisions related to indoor recreational facilities across the municipality. The strategy is predicated on community interest, financial feasibility, population and growth forecasts and outlines estimated timelines for the implementation of various types of recreational amenities in specific areas of the County. The strategy will be reviewed as part of another Council priority – the Comprehensive Financial Strategy – to determine financial capacity and funding sources relevant to the framework Council approved. Although the project was delayed from its initial deadline, it is now complete.

## **5. Caledonia Wastewater Treatment Facility**

Although this project experienced some significant delays from the originally anticipated timelines shown in the attachment, primarily due to updated servicing capacity needs which extend into 2030, the property has now been secured through an expropriation process. The project design and tender will be completed before the end of this term of Council however, the construction phase will stretch into the next term as a result.

## **6. Works Yard Rationalization Study**

This term of Council priority, renamed the Roads Optimization Review, began in 2024 after an RFP was awarded to the consulting firm, KPMG. The project involves a thorough review of existing Roads Yards within the County, current service levels and staffing, in comparison to best practices. It will offer improved methods for the County's Roads Yards to optimize the overall program and ultimately the service delivery to the community. A report will be coming forward to Council in the near future to provide details of the review and resulting recommendations. Similar to the Outdoor Recreational Facilities Strategy, the recommendations are anticipated to be considered further within the overall Financial Strategy, considering affordability and funding mechanisms.

The project start was slightly delayed due to vacancies in key management positions within the Public Works Operations Department. It is on track now, and expected that key decisions will be made by Council prior to the end of this term.

## **7. Comprehensive Financial Strategy**

As a result of growth within the municipality over the past several years and the resulting effect it has on operations and infrastructure needs, a comprehensive financial review and strategy is necessary to fully understand and predict the impact. The strategy will allow the County to develop appropriate policies and service levels to manage growth related needs and key strategic priorities of Council and ensure a future financing plan is in place that will mitigate risk and position the County well into the future. This project is slated to begin in 2025 with presentation of the recommended strategy prior to the end of this term of Council.

## **8. Traffic Management Strategy**

The Traffic Management Strategy began in 2024 on schedule and is currently undergoing a second and final round of public consultation before coming before Council for final approval. The 2025 Tax Supported Capital Budget includes a request to begin implementing some of the strategy in 2025. The Strategy encompasses a comprehensive approach to managing traffic issues within the County that are under the control of the municipality. The goal of the strategy is to incrementally address traffic concerns and improve the safety of the community.

## **9. County Website Improvements**

One of the top Council priorities involved improved communication through the County website. This project was recently completed near the end of 2024 and the new, improved and accessible website has garnered much positive feedback from the public and staff. The project, completed on time and on budget, saw an overhaul of the format of the website and a modernized approach to sharing information. It also included two micro-sites, one for each of the Haldimand County Public Library and Haldimand Tourism.

## **10. Ward Boundary Review**

The Ward Boundary Review priority is well underway and slightly ahead of schedule. The results of the consultant's review and public consultation will be presented to Council on the same agenda as

this report. It will examine options to change the ward structure across Haldimand based mainly on population growth today and into the future, as well as communities of interest. If approved, implementation of the new ward boundaries will take effect for the next municipal election in 2026.

## **11. Physician Recruitment Strategy**

Also included on this agenda is a detailed update on the success to date of the Physician Recruitment Strategy. Council approved and 3-year program in partnership with the Greater Hamilton Health Network(GHHN), which launched with the successful recruitment of a Physician Recruitment Coordinator, development and execution of Letter of Agreement with the GHHN that outlines the service delivery expectations of the program, securement of partner funding from two Haldimand hospitals and the Haldimand Family Health Team, updated marketing and promotion materials, established relationships with several community ambassadors and attendance at job fair/recruitment events. Ongoing progress will be reported to Council at key intervals of the program.

## **12. Affordable Housing Strategy**

The Affordable Housing Strategy is slated to begin mid 2026 to consider the municipalities role in the housing crisis, look at options and alternatives with respect to supports that could be possible at the municipal level, ongoing advocacy to the provincial and federal levels, and necessary policies to ensure consistent approaches.

## **Administrative Priority Focus Areas**

In addition to the Council identified priorities outlined above, four corporate administrative focus areas were also approved by Council to be completed over the 2022-2026 Term of Council.

### **1. Complete Corporate Technology Strategy**

As a result of a consultant review of the Information Technology program at the County, many recommendations were made to improve corporate technology framework within the organization to get closer to an appropriate baseline related to industry best practice across government. As a result, this strategy has primarily been implemented in full with the recent recruitment of the final recommended staff resource within the division. In addition, a governance model was introduced and is in it's infancy, but operating well. Overall, there has been significant improvement in the area of IT, with the oversight by key staff including the introduction of a Chief Information Officer. The area of corporate technology will always be progressive in nature with incremental improvements. IT is tied closely to the area of corporate continuous improvement and this will be a key factor in the ongoing success of the division.

### **2. Staff Recruitment & Retention**

This wide scoped priority targeted a coordinated and strategic approach to the attraction, development and retention of quality staff. Several components of the project were already completed coming into 2024. The redevelopment of a corporate onboarding and training program has begun but is delayed directly due to the delays in the People Project outlined above. An enhanced recruitment marketing program has been completed and is in regular use. Once the complete HR software upgrades are implemented, it is expected that more data will be available to better monitor the metrics related to this program. A major component of the recruitment and retention initiative was a compensation market review for the non union and CUPE staff groups considering one had not been completed in 15 years or more. The non union initiative was completed in 2024 and the CUPE initiative was recently presented and approved by Council. It will be implemented in 2025. The last component of this priority is the staff engagement survey which is expected to take place before the end of this term of Council.

### **3. Asset Management Program**

Asset management plans are a legislative requirement of the Province and the County has been working diligently towards achieving compliance, for several years. The asset management program is not the type of project that will see a completion date, rather it is a continuous, ongoing program. The core and non-core asset inventory has been completed and submitted to the province within the prescribed timelines, and the inventory continues to be updated by staff. The required Asset Management Action Plan is also complete and training of that plan to staff continues to be rolled out gradually. The development of asset lifecycles and risk frameworks are also a continual requirement that has been initiated and will be ongoing for some time, well beyond the Council term. Lastly, annual updates are to be submitted to the province and the County has completed these updates for 2024 and is on target for the July 2025 submission.

### **4. Customer Service Improvements**

Customer service remains a top priority within the municipal organization, both external facing service and internal support within the organization. The County continues to build and promote a culture of citizen centred service and most recently the bi-annual resident satisfaction survey results were presented to Council with excellent results. A coordinated approach to community engagement continues to be a work in progress and has seen some success, as to find an adequate balance in reaching out to the public for feedback at a pace that will optimize participation. Additionally, improvements to online services for customers continue to be implemented. In 2024 online burn permit and marriage license processing were enhanced allowing a more convenient method for the public to obtain these services. In 2025, a parking ticket payment option is being explored. These are examples of continuous improvement efforts that directly impact resident satisfaction.

In managing workload to resources ratios, it is important to note that during the course of the Council term, there are often other important projects and tasks that evolve. While the Term of Council and Corporate Priorities continue to be the primary focus of the Haldimand corporate work plan, often the emerging issues and unforeseen community demands require a shift in the workplan that may impact timelines and resource requirements, especially when the issue is an unexpected item such as a compliance or safety issue or unplanned vacancies in the organization. Despite the unanticipated challenges and an already ambitious work plan across the organization, several initiatives have been completed over the past 12 months in addition to the Council and corporate priority matters. Many of the initiatives completed or in progress are strategy or planning type projects that will set the stage to allow Haldimand to be future ready and respond to emerging challenges in the years to come. Attachment #2 includes a sampling of some of these additional initiatives. This is not an exhaustive list by any means but demonstrates the progression the County is making towards improvements to the community and within the organization. A further list of accomplishments by department will be presented to Council throughout the term, when each General Manager has the opportunity to present their bi-annual departmental report.

Furthermore, staff will be presenting a revised long term Strategic Plan for the organization at an upcoming Council in Committee meeting. This document will be the overarching plan for the County and all future priorities and initiatives, resource allocations and policy decisions will align with the approved plan. Future Term of Council Priority updates will correlate to the Strategic Plan to provide Council with a method of measuring the organization's progress.

## **REFERENCES:**

1. [CAO-01-2023 Term of Council Priorities – 2022-2026.](#)

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. 2018-2022 Term of Council Corporate Priorities – January 2025 Update.
2. Additional 2024 Haldimand County Achievements