

MAYOR'S COLUMN MARCH 2015

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND THE FINANCIAL PLAN

I am very pleased to be able to share Council's new strategic priorities, very recently adopted by Council, after many long meetings and much heartfelt discussion at the Council table.

We started our journey of setting new strategic priorities last fall. Before we could set new priorities, we carefully reviewed a number of factors. These ranged from an examination of documents including the existing Strategic Plan, the community's Sustainability Plan, our Official Community Plan to a look at current (and projected) local, regional and broader economic circumstances. We also took into account current and future needs of residents for infrastructure and services, existing and potential partnerships, leveraging grants, emerging community issues and the overall health and well-being of the community and the environment. All of this research was conducted in the context of our legislated responsibilities and requirements, consideration for the overall health and well-being of the community and the environment, and respect for the taxpayers' ability to pay for the programs and services we were contemplating.

Here are the five strategic priorities Council will focus on over the next four years:

- **Employment and Tax Diversity** – Promote responsible investment and innovative management of municipal resources to support community prosperity, sustainable economic development, industry diversification and quality of employment opportunities in the Ladysmith area.
- **Natural and Built Infrastructure** – Maintain, renew and expand both natural and built infrastructure.
- **Watershed Protection and Water Management** – be leaders, stewards and advocated for securing and protecting Ladysmith's watershed, delivery of safe drinking water and responsible management of water resources.
- **Communications and Engagement** – Improve community engagement and communications through active collaboration with partners and investment in information technology.
- **Partnerships** – Enhance connection to the community by broadening and strengthening collaboration. Accelerate delivery of strategic objectives by working with others, building internal and community capacity in the process. Facilitate meaningful citizen involvement.

Council has worked hard to produce our strategic priorities and related actions, but we fully understand that the plan is not static. We will continue to update it in response to your input and to changing circumstances in the community. So let us know what you think, and please continue to provide input and feedback.

Now that we have our priorities in place, we can now turn our attention to the budget. Council will be looking at programs, service and initiatives within each of our strategic priorities and setting the budget for 2016, and the 2016 to 2020 Financial Plan, accordingly.

I urge you to read our Council Strategic Priorities document for the full details. You can get it at www.ladysmith.ca, pick up a copy at City Hall, or call 250.245.6400 and we will send one to you.

Equally importantly, I also urge you to attend the Council meetings where we talk about our budget and Financial Plan. Those discussions will take place on the following dates:

- Tuesday, January 26th, 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. – begin discussions on priorities and budget at a Special Council meeting
- Friday, January 29th, 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. -- continue discussions at a Special Council Meeting
- Monday, February 15th – review the 2016-2020 Financial Plan at the Regular Council Meeting
- Monday, March 7th – consider Grants in Aid distribution at the Regular Council Meeting

There will be an opportunity for public input at each meeting. This is your chance to share your ideas and have your say. We will also post Financial Plan documents on our website as they are produced. Click on the **Financial Plan** link on the home page at www.ladysmith.ca.

Together, we can continue to develop and implement a plan and budget to build the future we all envision of a strong and vibrant community. I look forward to hearing from you.

Mayor Aaron Stone

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