THE DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY OF MUSKOKA

2018 - 2022 TERM OF COUNCIL

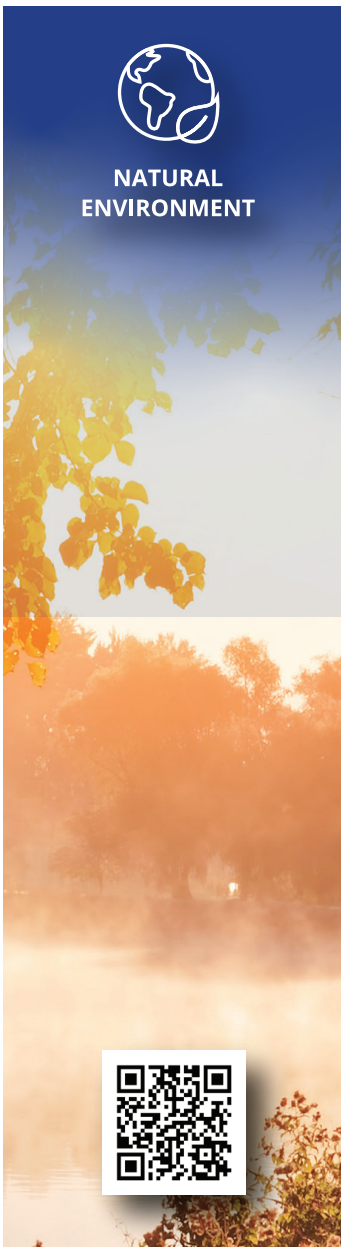
REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

The District of Muskoka's strategic vision is based on five priority areas intended to help manage the legacy of a healthy Muskoka by protecting the natural environment, driving a vibrant economy and enhancing the inclusiveness of its caring community.

NATURAL ENVIROMENT | COMMUNITY | INFRASTRUCTURE | GOVERNANCE | ECONOMY | COVID-19 RESPONSE

For more Information: www.muskoka.on.ca/strategic-priorities

Working together with the community, here are some of the key achievements from the 2018-2022 Term of Council, we can all be proud of:



Showing leadership in protecting Muskoka's environment by **declaring a climate emergency and taking both immediate and long-term action** to protect Muskoka's natural environment. **What does that look like?**

- Adopting the District's A New Leaf: Muskoka's Climate Strategy. Developing a **Climate Action Plan** for the District Municipality and the community and supporting other Area Municipalities who are developing their own Climate Action Plans
- Completing the second phase of **flood plain mapping and implementing** Making Waves: Integrated Watershed Management projects funded by the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks ($4.2M)
- Making it **easier for the public to access information** with our new **GeoHub** featuring enhanced GIS mapping and our **EnviroHub** highlighting the innovative environmental initiatives the District and our partners are working on together
- Making sure we are taking the **right steps to protect the health of our lakes** by completing six **Causation Studies**, part of our recreational water monitoring program

- Guaranteeing **smart, progressive growth and development** while protecting our environment by updating the **Muskoka Official Plan** and working closely with the community, stakeholders and the Township of Muskoka Lakes to further establish resort and commercial tourist policies through the **Minett Amendment**

Taking steps to **minimize the impact of our public works infrastructure** on Muskoka's natural environment while providing the services our residents rely on for their everyday life. **What does that look like?**

- Building a **better waste system** for Muskoka in our Waste Management Strategy and pledging to reduce the waste going into our landfills by committing to a goal of increasing Muskoka waste diversion to 60% in the next five years
- Taking action to protect our environment by **safeguarding against the impacts of closed landfills** in Muskoka and **removing unlicensed bin** sites that do not comply with provincial regulations
- Investing in **green energy** by installing a three-acre solar farm system at Golden Pheasant Water Treatment facility. The farm will generate electricity from a renewable source equivalent to 5% of the District's annual electricity needs and off-set approximately 80 tonnes of CO_2e annually
- Providing **safe, clean drinking water** for our communities and protecting our environment by producing and distributing over **11 million litres of drinking water** daily and collecting and treating almost **13 million litres of wastewater daily**



Taking steps to promote **inclusion and equity, celebrate diversity and combat racism and hate, established the IDEA** (Inclusion, Diversity, Equality and Anti-Racism) Advisory Group and approved its 2022-2026 action plan

Strengthening our **relationships with Indigenous Nations and addressing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) 94 Calls to Action** by establishing the Muskoka Area Indigenous Leadership Table (MAILT). **What does that look like?**

- Providing **Indigenous Awareness education** to over 1,000 staff, elected officials, and community members; and **establishing land acknowledgment guidelines**
- Embarking on a **journey to rename public assets** to align with the TRC's principles, starting with Muskoka Road 38
- Sponsoring the Misko-Aki exhibit at the Muskoka Steamship and Discovery Centre focused on **telling the Indigenous story of Muskoka**

Taking **accountability for the health and well-being of our communities** by expanding our role in delivering health care, increasing our investment in health services, and working with our partners to improve the local health system while planning for the future. **What does that look like?**

- Investing in **Muskoka's long-term care needs** and **protecting jobs** by transitioning Fairvern Nursing Home into our municipal operations and beginning the work to redevelop it into a 160-bed home that is expected to create **100 new jobs** and will add **84 new long-term care spaces** in our community
- Reducing emergency room visits and improving the overall quality of life and independence for patients by launching **Community Paramedicine** through $3.25M in funding and then expanding the program to add at least 10 more medics by the end of 2023
- Starting to **save for redeveloping our two hospital sites** by creating a reserve fund with a goal to build those savings over 15 years to meet the District's portion of the local share/community funding requirements
- Investing in **palliative care and hospice** services by providing grants to Muskoka Hospice to support the Andy's House palliative care project
- Helping patients **access health and mental health services** by working with our partners in the Muskoka and Area Ontario Health Team (MAOHT)
- Engaging with the community to create a **Community and Safety Wellbeing Plan** focused on addressing affordable housing and homelessness, improving patient navigation and access to mental health addictions services, overcoming labour-related challenges, and streamlining the provision of services across the District

- Addressing our growing housing crisis by improving access and increasing the supply of **appropriate, affordable housing for individuals and families** by creating 75 housing units across the District, providing $2.9 M in rent supplements, investing $5.3M in other affordable housing initiatives, and creating new transitional housing through the Home for Good (Alex's Place) project
- Developing **strategies to meet the housing needs of workers, families and seniors** by creating a housing task force and updating our 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan
- Taking action to address ever-growing **child care needs** and supporting **early childhood education** in Muskoka by leading the roll-out of the Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care system, developing a Workforce Development strategy for the Early Years and Child Care sector. Creating **134 new licensed child care spaces** which represents an 41% increase in child cares spaces available in Muskoka and creating a **dedicated EarlyON space** in Gravenhurst
- Enriching the lives of **seniors in rural and remote areas across Muskoka** through outreach, programming, and by coordinating volunteer supports
- Investing in **community-led initiatives by providing grants to 75 community groups** over four years across Muskoka through the Pay it Forward Grant and the Community Enhancement Fund
- Improving **public safety in emergencies** by launching the Voyent Alert public notification system in partnership with six Area Municipalities and two First Nation communities



Making sure our residents and communities have the **safe, reliable public infrastructure** they rely on every day by investing $124.2M into our roads, water and sewer, and solid waste systems. **What does that look like?**

- Investing $77.5M to upgrade **253 km of roads and 21 structural assets** - including King William/Main Street, the Swing and Canal Bridges, and the Big East River Bridge in Huntsville; Santa's Village Road in Bracebridge; and the Port Sandfield Bridge and the Mill Stream Bridge in Muskoka Lakes
- Investing $45.5M to upgrade and maintain the District's **18 water and wastewater plants** and connecting close to **650 water and 600 wastewater new customers**
- Investing $8.4M to expand our **garbage and recycling capacity** by adding new cells at the Rosewarne Landfill, building a new transfer facility for recycling, and improving our composting processes
- Strengthening our infrastructure and systems for the future by maintaining an **average condition rating of "good" for all of our core assets** and sustaining **a strong compliance record** across our water distribution and wastewater collection systems, 18 water and wastewater treatment facilities, and nine septage lagoons
- Making it **easier for the public to provide input and stay updated** on important capital projects like **Huntsville Main St. Redevelopment/Diggin Downtown** and **Fairvern Redevelopment** by launching a new community engagement strategy
- **Connecting more rural communities in Muskoka by expanding Community Transportation** to include a new east-west corridor that links the Corridor 11 route and Area Municipal transit programs in Bracebridge, Gravenhurst and Huntsville, adding "flex stops" that allow residents to be picked up at their home and, planning for the future through a Five-Year Transportation Growth and Sustainability Plan (2020)



- Strengthening our **financial health** by being a founding member in a joint investment board (with other municipalities) to increase our income from investments
- Reducing the costs to fund our infrastructure by achieving a **high credit rating (Aa1)** despite pandemic pressures, and by building up **internal savings through reserve funds** so that we can fund projects ourselves instead of using more expensive external debt/loans. Area Municipalities also benefit from lower debt cost as a result of this credit rating
- Keeping **taxes near or below the inflation rate** from 2019-2022
- Securing the **workforce we need for today** by negotiating seven collective agreements and making sure our non-union compensation is competitive with the market. Collaborating with partners on workforce development strategies that will help build the workforce we will need for the future
- Creating a **workplace that keeps our staff engaged and motivated** through a corporate-wide Values (RISE) project to enhance corporate culture, promote innovation, build leadership, strengthen team collaboration, and improve customer experiences
- Making our **programs and services more accessible** through our 2020–2022 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan by installing audible crosswalk signals, adding an accessible bus for public transit, upgrading our District housing and administrative offices, providing training and resources for staff, and launching a new accessible website



- Addressing **Muskoka's expanding development** needs by responding to an 11% increase in subdivision and condominium development applications, a 22% increase in public inquiries, and a 36% increase in commenting requirements for Area Municipal level development applications. Over 760 residential lots/units were draft approved in this term of Council
- Pushing for **affordable and reliable internet** access for residents and businesses in Muskoka by developing a Regional Broadband Strategy
- Connecting **more travellers and visitors to Muskoka** by working with our regional tourism partners to welcome scheduled passenger services from Porter Airlines and FlyGTA at the Muskoka Airport
- Laying the groundwork for **future development and job creation** in our Muskoka Airport Master Plan and welcoming Sky Service, Muskoka MOD Centre, and Enterprise as new tenants



Working Together to Continue Delivering our Programs and Services to our Community

Thank you to our health care heroes in our Long-Term Care (The Pines and Fairvern) and Muskoka Paramedic Services teams who rose to meet unprecedented challenges in our health care system. What does that look like?

- Long-Term Care staff at the Pines and Fairvern **doing everything possible to keep residents safe** and finding creative ways for them to **feel connected and at home** when families were not able to visit. Managing more than five outbreaks at the Pines in various home units, the most significant lasting **76 days and requiring** more than **150 residents to isolate**. Staff from departments across the District volunteered to provide support during the outbreaks
- Muskoka Paramedic Services for taking the lead on setting up and supporting **Assessment and Testing Centres** in Muskoka, delivering roughly **80 vaccine doses to homebound residents,** assisting public health at **mass vaccination clinics**, leading **drive-through clinics** in locations across Muskoka, and providing key support to The Pines to **address staffing shortages**

Thank you to our staff across all departments and divisions for working together to quickly adapt how programs and services were delivered, so residents had the programs and services they rely on daily. What does that look like?

- Continuing to deliver **close to 100% of our programs and services** throughout the pandemic
- **75% of staff continuing to work out in the community** throughout the pandemic in our **long-term care, paramedic, health services, water and wastewater, roads and transportation, solid waste, and facilities** teams
- Transitioning over **200 employees to work-from-home** arrangments through tremendous support and enhanced security from our IT Services team
- Making sure residents could access our critical services by shifting to **digital platforms, appointment-based visits and virtual service options**
- Ensuring a **safe and healthy workplace by implementing safety measures,** including daily screening, access to PPE, vaccination verification policy and rapid testing protocols
- Being the **second court in the Province to provide virtual hearings** at our Provincial Offences Act Court office
- Being quick to transition to host virtual meetings and **hosting more than 150 virtual meetings** since that time
- Childrens and Seniors staff supporting public health (SMDHU) call centres to **help Muskoka residents access vaccine appointments**



Providing New Supports for our Community during COVID

- Launching **targeted emergency child care (ECC) program** at no cost to eligible parents and supporting the licensed child care sector to adapt to COVID-19
- Helping parents return to work by **supporting Muskoka's licensed child care sector** adapt to COVID-19 through Safe Restart funding and distributing Rapid Antigen Tests to all licensed child care programs
- Shifting EarlyOn to **virtual interactive, outdoor programming and resources** to help parents feel connected and supported during an isolating time
- Taking immediate **steps to help seniors in rural and remote settings stay connected** to families, the community, and access supports by providing virtual programning and technology (ipads) if needed
- Providing COVID-related **emergency shelter solutions, transitional housing, homelessness prevention and rent relief,** and other key services (food, basic needs, transportation, and programming related to isolation) to the community by administer- ing $5.4M over five rounds of the Social Services Relief Fund (SSRF). Distributing over $1.1M of that SSRF funding to community agencies, food banks, organizations, clubs, faith groups to **provide food security, basic needs, PPE, transportation, mental health, and anti-isolation services** to our vulnerable population
- Making it easy for the public to access information and resources by creating an **online portal to help connect residents and businesses to the food, housing, income, and business support programs**
- Supporting our local economy and business owners by establishing the **Muskoka Economic Recovery Task Force**
- **Helping to maintain 773 local jobs** by supporting businesses unable to access various relief programs. The District's $750,000 loan helped Muskoka Futures create a $5.4M **Muskoka Business Recovery Fund, the largest loan program offered by any Community Futures** organization in the Province
- Continuing to **support families and households living in precarious financial circumstances** throughout COVID, and adapting how we deliver services in Muskoka to align with the transformation of social assistance delivery across the province



