

# Strategic Priorities & Operational Update

April 2024



## Overview of the Municipality

The Municipality of Colchester is a community of communities stretching over agricultural heartland of Nova Scotia, from the Northumberland Strait, to the Minas Basin, to the border of HRM, making it the 4<sup>th</sup> largest county in Nova Scotia and home to a variety of employment, educational, social, and housing opportunities.

While we cherish and protect our rich history, Colchester is also a modern municipality focused on the ever-evolving needs of our communities. Colchester delivers services, solely or in collaboration with community and government partners, in five distinct areas of a sustainable community:

- 1. Environment and safety**  
maintaining a healthy and natural environment through responsible use, protection, and sustainable practices.
- 2. Infrastructure**  
well maintained infrastructure and facilities that meet community needs and allow growth and development for prosperity.
- 3. Economy**  
building a strong and vibrant community by attracting, supporting, and retaining businesses and residents.
- 4. Social**  
building social capital and engaging citizens and partners to improve the well-being and diversity of the community.
- 5. Governance**  
fiscally sustainable.



## Overview of Strategic Priorities

Our strategic priorities document provides an overarching framework to communicate to the public, staff, community stakeholders, and government partners, a path by which we will achieve our commitments to creating a municipality that embraces innovation, good governance, and fiscal responsibility.

Identifying priorities allows Council and staff to make informed policy, operational and budget decisions, and provides a structure to ensure oversight and management of County initiatives and services.

Reporting on progress related to our priorities allows us to assess how we are doing and what adjustments may be needed.

Our strategic priorities were developed through an engagement process with Council and consisted of:

- **Strategic scan**
- **Brainstorming issues and opportunities**
- **Shortlisting priorities**
- **Exploring desired outcomes and response options**
- **Developing an action plan**
- **Committing to regular updates**

The strategic priorities were further developed with input and guidance from management from all departments in the organization. The result was the *Municipality of Colchester Strategic Priorities 2020-24*.

With this plan, Colchester will be able to make progress on its strategic goals and objectives as well as work to improve the core services provided. It has been developed under the guidance of the Corporate Leadership Team, Senior Management Team, as well as with input from staff across the organization. While this document is intended to provide further direction to all staff at the Municipality, it is also intended to be a resource for the public and Council.

## Strategic Priorities

As identified in the strategic priorities document, these are the 5 priorities that Council identified as needing immediate attention based on organizational importance, community benefit, urgency of time, and the ability to act on the initiative in the short-term.

### 1. Police Review

The Municipality's Police Review process, initiated with the Department of Justice in 2019, was paused in March 2022 so it could be informed by the Mass Casualty Commission Report. The Province has since hired an external consultant to conduct a comprehensive review of the policing structure in Nova Scotia and potentially recommend changes for how policing services are delivered. The review is expected to be complete by 2025 at which time Council will be in a better position to assess future policing options. Prior to the postponement, in 2020 an external consultant with expertise in policing (Mr. Bill Moore) was hired to serve as a technical advisor to Council. After undertaking a scan of the existing model utilized in the Municipality and having interviewed senior police and administrative leaders throughout the region/province, a survey was undertaken to verify Council's policing priorities. The report findings were subsequently presented to Council for consideration, including a ranking of components relative to Council's view of an ideal policing model. A meeting was then held between municipal senior staff and command staff of the Northeast Nova RCMP detachment to advise them of Council's stated policing priorities and to discuss the main findings of the consultant's report.

Additionally, despite extensive advocacy led by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), provincial-territorial associations, and local leaders across Canada, the Federal Government's budget did not meet the request to absorb the retroactive costs associated with the latest RCMP collective bargaining agreement. This is anticipated to have a significant impact on the Municipality's budget moving forward but to what extent has still yet to be determined.

### 2. Debert Business Park - Development Plan

Staff have completed mapping and planning exercises to produce a 10-year development plan for the Debert Business Park. Input was provided by the Debert Business Park Advisory Committee. The mapping documents provide insights on the highest and best use of Colchester's commercial land assets, sector identification, development timelines and infrastructure requirements. A complementary marketing plan has been produced, which includes marketing collateral, recommendations on business park signage, and listing price points for vacant land. The plan will be brought to Council for approval in May 2024.

### **3. Debert Airport - Strategy**

In 2023, Staff retained the services of InterVISTAS, a specialist consultant in the aviation industry. InterVISTAS provided their final report to Council in February of 2024. The findings of the report determined there was not a business case to guarantee a return on the cost of investment required to improve the Debert Airport infrastructure. Staff are working with the Province and Federal government to determine if the project can receive funding from both entities towards the required improvements for the Debert Airport. A definitive answer on potential funding opportunities will be brought to Council to aid in their decision for Airport investment.

### **4. Housing - Debert Housing Prospectus**

The Debert housing prospectus is on target. Since the strategic priorities session with Council, proposed development plans and standards have been developed. Servicing capacity is under review, and Provincial and Federal funding has been granted for required sewer infrastructure. Water system capacity evaluation is ongoing. The next steps include investigating private / public development partnerships and confirming a preferred project delivery approach; timeline April 2024. Capacity reviews for all of Colchester's water/sewer systems are currently underway to determine what is required to support future housing development potential (e.g., former Bates property in Bible Hill, former Salmon River School Property).

### **5. J Class Roads and Roads Assessments**

Various options for municipal investment in J Class Roads have been presented to Council over the years, none of which have been adopted. Council elected not to include funding for J Class Roads in their budget for 2024/25. The Province recently proposed changes to the Municipal Service Exchange Agreement relating to several road types including J Class, however no final decisions have been made. This item is still under review by the Province. It is anticipated that further consultation with municipalities will be required.

## Administrative and Operational Focus Areas

In addition to strategic priorities, and core services, each department has a variety of projects and initiatives that relate to the ongoing administration and operation of the Municipality. The following provides a departmental overview of these additional focus areas, their status, next steps, and anticipated timeline for completion.








### Administration

The Administration Department, under the CAO model of governance, is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Municipality, ensuring the implementation and delivery of programs and services that are approved by Council. In addition to this, the Administration Department is responsible for:

- **Economic development, including the Debert Business Park**
- **Research, policy, and community engagement**
- **Emergency management**
- **Corporate planning and strategic initiatives**

Status	Focus Area	Update	Next Steps	Timeline to Completion
	Colchester Tourism Strategy	<p>Marketing Levy By-law passed in Spring 2023 (enables Colchester to collect 3% tax on overnight accommodations).</p> <p>Implementation of the levy began April 1, 2024. Operators are now required to collect levy tax.</p> <p>In partnership with other municipal partners, Colchester started their Sustainable Tourism Expansion Program (STEP) for strategic planning. The community consultation process began in April 2024.</p>	<p>Collection of the first quarter levy period will begin July 1, 2024</p> <p>STEP program will be on going in summer and fall of 2024.</p>	Final report and recommendations for the use and governance of the levy funds is expected to be complete November 2024.

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Status	Focus Area	Update	Next Steps	Timeline to Completion
	Government Relations	Mapping of current intergovernmental relationships; review of NS departmental mandate letters to identify areas of mutual interest.	Develop an information package to provide to staff and Council.	TBD
	Business Planning	The 2022-23 Business Plan was presented to Council on October 27, 2022	Continue to implement and monitor progress. Determine process for updating Plan	Completed
	Boundary Review	The Boundary Review Study and Application was submitted to the NSUARB in February 2023. A Public Hearing was held virtually on April 24, 2023. Approval of the Application was received June 2, 2023.	Implement new boundaries for upcoming 2024 Municipal Election	Completed
	Community Engagement Strategy	The Community Engagement Strategy first adopted April 2019 was updated in November 2023. A Communications A Policy to support the strategy was adopted by Council January 2024		Completed
	Rural Broadband Internet Project	The physical portion of the fixed wireless build was deemed complete in November 2023.  91km of fibre deployment is complete (15% of the total 630km of fibre planned for the RBP).  The fibre build along Hwy 2 in Economy has begun. The service is scheduled to be live October 2024.	The fibre build portion of the project is estimated to be completed by December 2025.	December 2025

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## Corporate Services









Corporate Services is led by the Director of Corporate Services as well as the Manager of Computer and Information Systems, and the Manager of Finance. This department is responsible for providing services such as:

- **Procurement**
- **Finance and taxation**
- **Human resources**
- **Computer and information services**
- **Municipal building services**

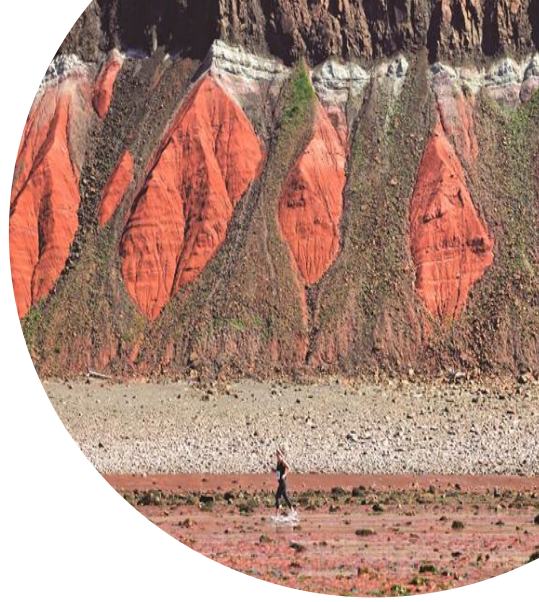


Status	Focus Area	Update	Next Steps	Timeline to Completion
	E-commerce Plan Adoption (for items other than tax payments)	Implemented EFT for accounts payable; implemented Paymentus option for payments made such as permits.	No further action required.	Completed
	Migration of Email from Traditional Servers to Cloud Base	Final testing and Azure AD preparedness checks; migration of user data; redirection of inbound mail flow; Domain Name System (DNS) changes to reflect changes for clients have all been completed.		Completed
	PSSP Pension Plan Transfer	Final payment to PSSP of funds for transfer has taken place.	No further action required.	Completed
	Bi-annual Non-union Salary Review	The review was completed and approved by Council on November 24, 2022.	No further action required at this time.	Completed



Status	Focus Area	Update	Next Steps	Timeline to Completion
	Staff Drug and Alcohol Policy	Council approved updates to the Policy on November 24, 2022.		Completed
	Building Lease Negotiation with Dept. of Justice	New terms agreed upon and signed by CAO.		Completed
	Recruitment & Retention Strategy	Staff researched strategies used by other municipalities and completed an internal survey to inform the strategy.	Draft strategy based on the data collected	June 2024
	Asset Retirement Obligation	Complete the Financial Standard for PS 3280 and incorporate into financial statements.		Completed
	IT Policy Review	Review and update IT policies.	Update policies for IT services.	September 2024
	SQL Database Server	Upgrade & migration is complete.		Completed
	Financial Statement Mapping	Updating the process for creating year end financial statements, mapping the general ledger to statements to replace current manual process.	Process will begin early 2024.	June 2024
	Procurement Policy Update	Investigating policy amendments to improve procurement process.	Share draft amendments with Managers and Directors for input.	June 2024






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## Solid Waste

Solid Waste is led by the Director of Solid Waste in conjunction with the Manager of Balefill and Compost Operations and the Manager of Reduction and Recovery Operations (currently vacant). This department is responsible for providing services under four pillars:

- **Balefill solid waste services, administration, and maintenance**
- **Composting facility services, administration, and maintenance**
- **Materials Recovery Facility for recycling services, administration, and maintenance**
- **Solid waste reduction services for education, compliance, and administration**






Status	Focus Area	Update	Next Steps	Timeline to Completion
	Deliver the Colchester-Wide Litter Strategy	Completed Colchester Clean program results were very successful in 2022 & 2023.	Finalizing details for implementation and roll out of program in Spring 2024.	June 2024
	Develop a Tender for the Capping of Landfill Cells 1, 2, and 3	Workplan is being developed in conjunction with environmental consultant.	Prepare tender document, post tender, award tender, and cap cells.	October 2024
	Reissue of Residential Household Hazardous Waste Contract	Tender posted in February 2024. Revied and awarded in March 2024		Completed
	Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Regulations Approved Province-wide	Collecting information and preparing for upcoming implementation December 1, 2025.	Meet with Producer Responsible Organization, collect necessary data, and review.	2024/2025
	Implement new C&D Regulations	Prepared educational materials, promoted and implemented changes to new C&D regulations for pressure treated lumber.		Completed

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## Engineering and Public Works

Engineering and Public Works is led by the Director of Engineering and Public Works. This department is responsible for providing services such as:

- Project management
- Road maintenance
- Sidewalk maintenance and construction
- Municipal sewer and water collection systems
- Various capital projects
- Debert Airport




Status	Focus Area	Update	Next Steps	Timeline to Completion
	Debert Airport Strategy	Presented information to Council in October 2022. More information required on future business opportunities. Retained InterVISTAS to complete a business case based on potential economic opportunities and estimated infrastructure investment.	Business Plan to be brought back to Council.	December 2023
	Asset Management Plan	Formal procedures to be updated and documented.	Update Municipal Transportation Infrastructure Maintenance Policy to include water and sewer.	December 2024
	By-law Compliance Plan	Already monitoring compliance among known industrial users.	Documented approach to annual monitoring, including steps for compliance follow-up.	December 2024
	Debert Services	Funding granted for new plant and sewer piping, water system upgrades being reviewed, RFP approach for development being considered.	Confirm water system capacity, issue RFP to developers, decide on development approach.	August 2024
	Engineering Standards Review	No action taken due to workload.	Internal review and update of existing document.	June 2024

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## Community Development





Community Development is led by the Director of Community Development, as well as the Manager of Planning Services, Manager of Recreation, Supervisor of GIS & Property Information, and the Manager of Inspection Services.

- **Community planning and development agreements**
- **Sustainability planning**
- **Building and fire inspections**
- **Building permits**
- **Heritage properties**
- **Recreation, culture, parks, and trails**

Status	Focus Area	Update	Next Steps	Timeline to Completion
	Energy and Emissions Plan – “Carbon Free Colchester”	Council approved Carbon Free Colchester plan in February 2022.	Ongoing implementation.	Completed
	Tatamagouche Plan	Engagement and background work is complete.  Currently developing draft documents.	Incorporate updated land use policies and regulations into the county-wide MPS & LUB.	Ongoing
	Housing Policies	Early progress has been made in terms of broader approaches to address housing policies. Debert housing initiative, while focussed, forms part of this initiative. Tatamagouche MPS will modernize housing policies to address current issue areas.	Review existing housing policies in Central Colchester MPS. Identify possible policy solutions and municipal initiatives to facilitate affordable housing. Report to Council on findings and recommended changes.	Ongoing Implementation

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	Fundy Discovery Site (Active Transportation)	Provincial and Federal approval received for the bridge project. Power line relocation design is underway with NSP which is necessary before any on-site construction can begin. All Provincial and Federal permits and approvals have been received. <b>Bridge tender was modified and reissued.</b>	Finalize powerline relocation plans and work with NSP and communication companies to complete work. Finalize Indigenous consultations. <b>Results of tender to be reviewed with Council.</b>	Ongoing
	County-Wide Planning	Community engagement process is complete. Work is commencing on draft documents. <b>Senior Planner's position has been filled in early January 2024 to assist with Plan development</b>	Complete draft plan and gain public feedback prior to completing final document.	Fall 2024.
	Wind Turbine Development By-law Review	Reviewed and made changes to By-law.		Completed
	Dog By-law Review	Reviewed and made changes to By-law.		Completed
	Dangerous or Unightly Premises By-law Review	Changes made to By-law that will help with enforcement.		Completed
	Hearts Haven Memorial Park	Park is complete. An official opening event was held July 23, 2023.	Minor landscaping.	Completed
	Trail Plan Update	<b>Early stages of a review of the Trail Plan. Need to update document.</b>	Update Trail Plan. Make changes.	Present to Council Fall 2024
	Tatamagouche Recreation Plan	Plan has been written and presented to committee and Village of Tatamagouche.	Application for Grants to hire a recreation person for the Village by March 1, 2024.	Completed
	Salmon River School Property	All consultations complete and Council decisions made.	Issue RFP for housing (40%) / recreation (60%).	Completed

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