

Town of Port Hawkesbury 2022 Year in Review

Introduction

The Town of Port Hawkesbury, Council and Staff, have been working diligently to progress Town Council's 5 strategic priorities (Active Transportation/Recreation, Housing, Waterfront Development, Physician/Medical Health Care Recruitment and Retention, and Economic Development). We have also been working diligently on work outside of our strategic priorities that lend to the overall goals of progressing the Town of Port Hawkesbury as well as the Strait Unama'kik and Cape Breton region. Below is a review that highlights key work and achievements but is certainly not exhaustive.

Strategic Priority: Active Transportation and Recreation

It is important that Port Hawkesbury is an inclusive Town for everyone, no matter what age or level of ability. We have local committees with both elected, staff and community members who dedicate their work to improving Port Hawkesbury's inclusivity, such as the Port Hawkesbury Accessibility Advisory Committee and the Port Hawkesbury Parks and Recreation Committee. We also have dedicated staff who work hard to identify key projects and funding opportunities which Council is happy to support and assist with.

- In the Spring of 2022, the Port Hawkesbury Accessibility Advisory Committee presented a Municipal Accessibility 3-year plan to Town Council, with short, medium and long-term recommendations to be accomplished as a town, and also with strategic partnerships with other stakeholders. The Accessibility Plan was made possible thanks to the active participation by our community and a motivated Accessibility Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee explored all the way we: work, live, play, move and consume in relation to the indoor and outdoor built environments. The Advisory Committee continues to meet to assess progress and identify concerns. This work will continue into 2023.
- The Port Hawkesbury Recreation and Active Living Advisory Committee is a local town committee made up of representatives from the community, as well as Town of Port Hawkesbury elected officials and staff. They work on improving recreation spaces and exploring new recreation-based opportunities in the Town. One project they presented to council in 2022 is the idea for an all-wheels park that is tentatively being planned as a new addition to the current Port Hawkesbury Community Park at the MacQuarrie Drive Extension location. This committee is also proud to see this park connected to the community via a new active transportation trail – as that was an important element to provide an accessible and safe walkable access to the park area and recreation fields. The plan for a new all-wheels park will continue in 2023 with this committee.
- The ongoing building of our Active Transportation Network in Port Hawkesbury: 2022 saw the completion of the MacQuarrie Drive Extension active transportation lane (August). This new lane has been very well used and provides an all-ages/all levels of ability

accessible surface that allows direct access to our Community Park (with splash pad, playground, multi-purpose court, etc.) as well as sports facilities.

Early completion and good pricing for the MacQuarrie project enabled the Town to advance a portion of the Waterfront phase and increase accessibility to that area by replacing the aged boardwalk with an all-ages/all levels of ability accessible surface for year-round activity.

- Sidewalk Reconstruction: One of the primary accessibility concerns of residents is the condition of our sidewalks. Public Works staff undertook a significant amount of replacement of sidewalk this summer and fall and have managed to address many of the areas in the worst condition. This work included the installation of accessible curb cuts constructed to an enhanced standard. With approximately 30 kilometers of sidewalk in Town, much of which was constructed more than 40 years ago this is an ongoing concern. The following sidewalks have been replaced in 2022:
 - Reynolds Street
 - MacSween Street
 - Granville Street
 - Church Street
- Food Bank Renovations: With much needed help from the Federal Government's Downtown Revitalization fund and support from the Town and Food Bank, renovations on the Port Hawkesbury Food Bank building are nearing completion. Work completed includes the installation of walk-in cooler and walk in freezer units, construction of a porch area for protection from the weather for clients, new entrances, kitchen improvements, heating system upgrades, new siding, windows and flooring replacement, and especially much-needed accessibility renovations so access for all ages and levels of ability was improved.
- Granville Green Concert Series: After two-year hiatus the Granville Green Concert Series was held. The concerts were very well attended with crowds exceeding what we had experienced in many years. For the first time, we were able to install accessible portable washroom facilities and will continue to work on making this venue more accessible in 2023 and beyond.
- Equipment is an important part of ensuring our recreation facilities are fully functioning. A new Zamboni was purchased in 2022 (with funding from CCTH) to be put into use at the Veterans Memorial Arena at the Port Hawkesbury Civic Centre.

Strategic Priority: Housing

Housing has been a long-standing priority of the Town of Port Hawkesbury and will continue to be so into 2023. We participate on two committees, one regional, and one local, that focuses on housing challenges and opportunities.

- Strait Richmond Housing Matters Coalition (regional committee with multiple stakeholders). This committee has stakeholders from the community, from both Richmond and Port Hawkesbury Councils, from public sector and private sector (developers) as well as post-secondary representatives and others. This group was able to partner to have a service-based count done to better understand some of the needs in the Cape Breton south region. We also invited various speakers to help inform our understanding of housing programs (provincial and federal) as well as development opportunities, and the challenges with housing in our region.
- Port Hawkesbury Housing Advisory Committee (local committee). This committee includes elected representatives from the Town of Port Hawkesbury, Town staff and community members who would like to see more housing developed in Port Hawkesbury. The Cape Breton Partnership and Strait Area Chamber of Commerce have played a vital role in moving the mandate of this committee forward. This committee explored the current environment and need for housing in the Town of Port Hawkesbury using a survey developed and completed with the help of the Cape Breton Partnership. It was determined that for 2023, since the need for housing is so pronounced, and since the topic of housing came up so often with the Port Hawkesbury Economic Development committee, to combine both committees to create a hyper-focus on the need for housing. This committee also partnered with the Town of Port Hawkesbury and the Strait Area Chamber of Commerce to launch a housing strategy project, for which, the services of New Dawn Enterprises was secured to do this work.
- Housing Strategy Project. This project is being led by the Strait Area Chamber of Commerce in partnership with the Town of Port Hawkesbury, as well as the Port Hawkesbury Housing Advisory Committee with support from the Strait Richmond Housing Matters Coalition. The work today has included community consultation and a deep study of the housing needs for Port Hawkesbury; New Dawn Enterprises has been hired to compile data and provide a recommendations document to assist the Town of Port Hawkesbury and the Chamber of Commerce with housing. One of the project outcomes will be options for the development of a regional non-profit housing enterprise/association to help development needed housing projects in the Cape Breton south region (Town of Port Hawkesbury and Richmond County). The project is due to be completed in 2023.
- The Town of Port Hawkesbury has also met with several developers regarding potential housing projects and will continue to promote the Town and meet with prospective developers into 2023 to encourage housing projects across the housing spectrum. The town is interested in seeing multiple housing developments, from family units/apartments to seniors and accessible housing, student housing and more.

Strategic Priority: Waterfront Development

It is important that Port Hawkesbury is an inclusive Town for everyone, no matter what age or level of ability.

- The Waterfront Development Advisory Committee includes representatives from the community as well as Town of Port Hawkesbury elected officials and staff. Work on a multi-year waterfront development plan continued throughout 2022 and will continue into 2023. The committee will continue to work on moving recommendations forward to council for work needed at the waterfront, both short and long-term. Recommendations include the green space named “Sunset Park” near the entryway to Granville Street. Citizens will notice the accessible parking added there as well as the fence and landscaping installations. More work will be done to this space and at the waterfront area in 2023 with the help of this committee.
- Waterfront Revitalization Project: The Town was very fortunate to receive Federal funding for Waterfront Revitalization. Work has begun on the project with improvements occurring to Sunset Park and accessibility improvements on Water Street. Work will continue next year on the project with the installation of kiosks, a community art installation and interpretive signage replacement.

Strategic Priority: Health Care Professional Recruitment and Retention

The Town of Port Hawkesbury has partnered with the Municipality of the County of Richmond to co-fund Cape Breton South Recruiting for Health (CBSRH). CBSRH has a governing body made up of many stakeholders that work together to inform the work plan for CBSRH director Gina MacDonald. CBSRH membership includes community representatives from the region, members from the professional health care community, elected representatives from both Richmond and Port Hawkesbury Councils, the Strait Area Chamber of Commerce and the Cape Breton Partnership. CBSRH works with healthcare stakeholders in the region and in the Province – particularly Nova Scotia Health, to participate in retention and attraction opportunities for the Cape Breton South region. Some of the capacity built to date is a CBSRH website with promotional content, ambitious work plans and site visits, and more. Below are some 2022 progress highlights provided by the CBSRH director.

- A CBSRH presentation to PRAP cohort yielded a new physician for the Port Hawkesbury Collaborative Clinic; tentative start date is April 2023.
- 2022 Community of Care Awards Gala was held in Port Hawkesbury and was a huge success: 10 awards were distributed to many phenomenal health care professionals. The 2023 ceremony is expected to take place in Port Hawkesbury in April, and the event’s success is to be adopted Province-wide in 2024!
- Valuable contacts were made with 130+ family medicine residents at a September 2022 Dalhousie University retreat. Community visits are planned for 2023.
- Hosted 3 interested family medicine residents for a weekend-long retreat, which included a driving tour of the Town, trail walk, tours of the Collaborative Clinic and Strait Richmond Hospital, among other facilities in the region. All three professionals have expressed serious interest in practicing in Cape Breton South (note: spouse of one resident has taken meetings in Port Hawkesbury re: opening a dental practice).
- We had 4 International Medical Graduates identified and referred to Nova Scotia Health Recruitment and Nova Scotia Government for licensing; all are either current residents of Port Hawkesbury or have expressed their desire to practice in the area.

- Collaboration with Nova Scotia Health working group to determine area needs and submitted funding application to the Nova Scotia Government in December 2022.
- Proposal submitted to Office of Healthcare Professional Recruitment for project grant funding and organizational readiness improvements for Cape Breton South Recruiting for Health.

Strategic Priority: Economic Development

The Town of Port Hawkesbury is committed to working with the Strait Area Chamber of Commerce, the Cape Breton Partnership, and other economic development stakeholders and developers in the Town and the Cape Breton Unama’kik Strait region. 2022 was an extremely busy year on this file; below is a summary of some milestones.

- The Town of Port Hawkesbury Economic Development Advisory Committee is a local committee made up of members of the community, members of the Strait Area Chamber of Commerce and the Cape Breton Partnership, as well as elected members of Town Council and staff. This local committee had the opportunity to invite an offshore wind innovator to speak to the group about his project and the committee began the groundwork to learn as much as they could about the local wind resources in the Strait, the offshore wind opportunity, as well as opportunities for green energy (particularly green hydrogen). This work led to the genesis of the Strait of Canso Offshore Wind Task Force with multiple regional partners (for which several of his local committee members participate on the task force). With the task force continuing to pursue the opportunity around offshore wind and green hydrogen in the Strait. Council determined that they’d like to see a hyper-focused effort dedicated to housing as an economic development opportunity and has combined both the housing and the economic development local committees into one called Port Hawkesbury Development. This new committee will be formed and will determine its objectives in 2023.
- Strait of Canso Offshore Wind Task Force is a group with a diverse array of membership from First Nation Unama’kik communities, Strait Area municipalities (elected and staff), Strait Area Chamber of Commerce, Cape Breton Partnership, NSCC, venture capital, industry leaders (including in the fisheries), business leaders, and community members. Town of Port Hawkesbury Mayor Chisholm-Beaton and Municipality of Richmond County Warden Mombourquette co-chair this task force.

The task force have worked with subject matter experts to gather research and information to better understand this opportunity, to share this knowledge with municipalities, First Nation communities, and other interested groups, and to work with the Province of Nova Scotia and the Federal Government to ensure our community has a voice in the cultivation of this emerging industry opportunity, in ensuring best practices that will best meet the local needs of the Cape Breton Unama’kik Strait region, along with the opportunities around training and education, around oceans and green tech innovation, around supply chain development, around research and development of critical infrastructure in the Strait of Canso, and more. This group has done a tremendous amount of work that has been recognized by the Province of Nova Scotia. The Province of Nova Scotia has set ambitious targets for offshore wind and is working with the Federal Government of Canada on a

parallel pathway to establish a regulatory framework. The work of the task force will continue into 2023, as this is an exciting opportunity for not only our region, but for the Province, for Atlantic Canada and for Canada more generally.

- Cape Breton Strait REAP Team: Port Hawkesbury Mayor Chisholm-Beaton is the team champion for this group and the key focus is regional economic acceleration using economic development tools provided by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Regional Entrepreneurship Acceleration Program (REAP). Our team was one of five teams from Nova Scotia who participated in this program. The team itself was made up of regional leaders from the Cape Breton/Strait region, and included members from post-secondary, government/economic development, industry, entrepreneurs, and risk capital. We discovered that our region has a mature innovation ecosystem with innovation enterprises at multiple stages of their lifecycle, and our team created a list of must-win battles we'd like to achieve for our region. The REAP team recognized the incredible opportunity of offshore wind and the need to establish a Research Centre in the region (note: many of the REAP team members have joined the Strait of Canso Offshore Wind Task force to continue to build momentum of the Research Centre goals). The REAP team also recognized the need to establish an Innovation Centre in the region that can capitalize on the emerging opportunity around offshore wind and clean ocean tech, as well as other ocean-based innovations (including oceans safety). The team is also working on an innovation-focused capital fund that has a pan-Provincial scope, as well as establishing our region as an innovation destination.

Apaq't Place – Oceans Innovation Centre: As part of the Cape Breton Strait REAP Team's work - in partnership with the Town of Port Hawkesbury, NSCC, and the Cape Breton Partnership - Apaq't Place continues to be developed as an innovation space for ocean tech and marine renewables. This space is in the front part of the former Creamery building that now houses extension training facilities for the Strait Area NSCC and Nautical Institute. This innovation centre will continue to be developed in 2023 and will welcome new tenants and programs into the space in partnership with the Town, NSCC, the Cape Breton Partnership, and other innovation stakeholders.

- The Town of Port Hawkesbury recognizes the importance of being open for business and to ensure we can accommodate citizens and visitors to the Town who drive electric vehicles. The town has invested in two new electric vehicle charging heads – with shared investments from government funding. Both charging stations are installed at the Port Hawkesbury Civic Centre.

Other Important Town of Port Hawkesbury 2022 Milestones

Of course, the Town of Port Hawkesbury is invested in the above 5 key priority areas, however, we are a town on the move, and we are also extremely busy with many other files and municipal objectives. As a Town, we know our community wants to see improvements in roads and sidewalks. We also know that our community wants to see that the Town is prepared when we have emergency weather incidents or other emergency preparedness. Finally, our town will grow

at a faster rate when we are working together with our First Nation and Municipal neighbors in our region. The following outlines some 2022 highlights on these and other files.

Street Rehabilitation and Repair Work

- We know it is important to our community that as a Town – that we continue to work on the rehabilitation and repair of our road networks. In 2022, we underwent an ambitious Asphalt Rehabilitation Program to mill and replace asphalt. This work was completed on the following streets:
 - MacMaster Road
 - Philpott Street
 - Hemlock Dr
 - Oak Crescent
 - Langley Lane
 - Water Street
 - Paint Street
 - MacIntosh Ave
 - Reynolds Street
 - Pinecrest Drive
 - Sidewalk Replacements
 - Reynolds Street
 - MacSween Street
 - Granville Street
 - Church Street

This much needed work will extend the life of the streets and represented a large investment by Town of Port Hawkesbury Council.

Public Works Highlights

- Water Street Boardwalk AT Project
- MacQuarrie Drive Ext AT Project
- WTP Process Control Upgrades Project
- Water System Assessment Report Project
- Sunset Park Project
- Business Park Ditching Project
- Granville Street / Sydney Road Intersection Upgrades
- Streetlight Policy Development

- Landrie Lake
 - Dam Safety Management Plan
 - Operations, Maintenance & Surveillance plan
 - Emergency response plan
 - Potential failure mode analysis plan
 - Green Hydrogen Developments
 - Landrie Lake Water Utility Yield Analysis
 - Watershed Boundary signage installations

Public Works: Building and Fleet Upgrades

- Public Works Equipment Replacement: Town Council has made a considerable investment in vehicle and equipment replacement this year:
 - New 2022 CAT 440 backhoe (repaired from fire)
 - New 2022 Ford F-550 plow, spreader, landscape dump-body truck
- Additionally, investments were made in new Recreation Department equipment as well, such as the purchase of new Kabota Ride-on lawn mowers, a Kabota Tractor 1001, and a John Deer Gator.
- Public Work Building Fire: Unfortunately, a fire in our Public Works Garage resulted in extensive damage to the building vehicles and equipment. Thankfully, the damage could have been much worst were it not for the fast response of the Port Hawkesbury Volunteer Fire Department. Currently, we are grateful to our Town’s Public Works staff who have been able to maintain operations, who have put in place temporary accommodation and participated in clean up post-fire. The extensive damage to the facility will result in the replacement of the public works building in 2023. A request for proposals has been advertised for architectural services for the new Public Works building.

Town of Port Hawkesbury Emergency Preparedness

- Emergency Management Preparedness: The Town had the good fortune to test its relatively new Emergency Management Plan through an exercise conducted by the N.S. Emergency Management Office. This event was conducted regionally with three municipalities participating, including Inverness and Victoria Counties.
- One of the Town’s most important partners in Emergency Preparedness is the Port Hawkesbury Volunteer Fire Department. The PHVFD is always instrumental in the planning and implementation of any EMO incidents. 2022 saw the successful installation of a new generator at the Port Hawkesbury Volunteer Fire Department so that in 2023 and beyond, the department is ready for any future comfort centre needs.

Regional Collaboration

- Landry Lake Water Utility: This water utility is co-owned and managed by both the Town of Port Hawkesbury and the Municipality of the County of Richmond.
- Allan J. MacEachen Regional Airport: A strategic planning session was held with municipal, community, business and industry stakeholders, in partnership with the Cape Breton Partnership. We hope to see some of these strategic plans move forward in 2023, with the help of the Allan J MacEachen Airport Committee. Also in 2022, the runway underwent some testing to determine its lifespan, and discussions regarding airport improvements began with the Province of Nova Scotia and will continue into 2023. It is great to see more attention placed in the importance of this critical transportation asset and its role in the Strait region's transportation hub of road, rail, port and air infrastructure.
- Joint Business Park Commission: First the first time in decades, the Joint Business Park Commission met formally in 2022 to discuss the future of Unity Drive, a 200+ acres park owned by both the Town of Port Hawkesbury and the Municipality of the County of Richmond. Meetings will continue in 2023, as the commission discusses the future development of this park.
- Cape Breton Regional Enterprise Network: We continue to work with First Nation (Membertou, We'koqma'q, Wagmatcook, Eskasoni) and Municipal partners (Victoria, Inverness, Richmond and Port Hawkesbury) at the CB REN table led by the Cape Breton Partnership. Critical work is done by an Economic Development Officer that is shared by the Town of Port Hawkesbury and the Municipality of the County of Richmond, particularly on the offshore wind and green hydrogen file. A new economic development officer will be starting in 2023, in the interim staff from the Cape Breton Partnership have been assisting with the economic development work in the Cape Breton South Region.
- Strait Area Transit:

The Board for Strait Area Transit is comprised of two municipal council representatives from both the Counties of Inverness and Richmond as well as the Town of Port Hawkesbury along with a representative from the Department of Community Services and a representative from the Richmond County Literacy Network. Our employees currently consist of three full-time and one part-time drivers, a dispatcher and an Executive Director.

- In 2022 with the sudden high increases of fuel, operational supplies, vehicle maintenance, etc., a difficult decision had to be made to increase our clients' fares. In order to keep our fares affordable for all members of our community, the decision of a fare increase of \$2.50 was made. The total fare is now \$7.50 one way, increased from the \$5.00, one way fare that we have charged since opening our doors in 2007.
- During 2022, there has been a struggle at Strait Area Transit, as well as other rural transit providers across the province to hire new drivers. All 23 of the rural transit

providers are currently operating with limited and/or short staff. This issue is province wide and certainly not unique to Strait Area Transit. One of the main challenges in recruiting additional drivers appears to be with respect to wages. The Board of SAT is hopeful that there may action taken by the Province in 2023 to try to address this issue.

- There have been concerns identified by residents and the Municipal Council in Richmond County about service challenges with our current Dial-a-Ride service. The SAT Board and staff will be making efforts to address these concerns in the current year.
- SAT recently received positive news for the organization and the communities we service. Strait Area Transit has been awarded \$399,849 from the federal government and just over \$99,000 from the provincial government, for a total of \$499,812 for the purchase of 3 new accessible vehicles to add to our fleet. Without funding streams like the Rural Transportation Solutions Fund or the Accessible Transportation Assistance Program, Strait Area Transit would not be able to continue providing all inclusive, safe, reliable, accessible, environmentally friendly, and professionally delivered transit services to the residents of the Strait Area. Rural transportation is an essential service to all, with the purchase of three Ford Transit's, it gives Strait Area Transit the ability to have a further reach to our local communities.
- Additionally, SAT has also recently received one-time investments from the Government of Canada and the Province of Nova Scotia in response to the impacts of COVID-19 on transit services since the Spring of 2020 to be applied toward capital or operating shortfalls in the amounts of \$101,472 for SAT's fixed route service in Inverness County and \$41, 436.