



# Frontenac County Strategic Plan

2019-2022

## Introduction

This plan provides comprehensive direction for the County and guides how it will accomplish key strategic priorities in need of special attention, effort or resources over the current term of Council.

Frontenac County ranges over an almost 4,000-square-kilometre rural area, with a population of 26,677 residents plus seasonal visitors, surrounding a city of more than 125,000. Life in the Frontenacs is connected to Kingston’s urban centre via employment, healthcare and educational services. The County also operates within a larger provincial, national and even international context.

Considerations of this character, the operating environment, and extensive input from township councils and the public, have framed development of the strategies and action objectives that follow.

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# Executive Summary – Frontenac County Strategic Plan 2019-2022

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## The Guiding Vision for Frontenac County

The County of Frontenac is committed to sustaining diverse, strong, and resilient rural communities known for their unique natural environment and lifestyle choices.



## The County of Frontenac Mission (Statement of Purpose)

The effective, efficient and sustainable delivery of services to citizens.



## Strategic Priorities for 2019-2022

### 1) Get behind plans that build community vitality and resilience in times of growth and change.

- Provide committed leadership and continuing support to the long-term regional plan to **enhance broadband and cell service**.
- Refine and invest in efforts to **accelerate economic development** — to grow businesses, attract more visits and expand the tax base.
- **Pursue proactive planning approaches** that reflect local concerns and priorities within strategic regional planning policy so as to enhance service levels, manage rising demand for new housing and deal with new types of development.

### 2) Explore new funding sources and invest wisely in critical long-term infrastructure.

- To meet the needs of future capital projects, **explore new sources of funding support** (current and future programs), cost-sharing options and other potential economies.
- Design a framework, explore options and initiate plans for development of a long-term care facility that will meet **Fairmount Home's** mandate.
- Develop plans within a changing legislative and service delivery landscape to provide additional facilities for **Frontenac Paramedics** that will effectively meet steadily growing demand for services and accommodate more paramedic training.
- Finalize plans and financing to replace/construct/renovate **aging County buildings** now used for administration services (through a shared admin facility if possible).
- Explore a collaborative upper-tier role for the County in **securing potential funding and support** for township maintenance of roads & bridges in a regional road system.

### 3) Champion and coordinate collaborative efforts with partners to resolve complex problems otherwise beyond the reach of individual mandates and jurisdictions.

- Work with the townships, other municipalities and levels of government **on broad infrastructure issues** — ranging from environmental concerns to regional transportation strategies for residential, social and economic purposes, and access to funding.
- Play a **leadership role on communications** to promote shared messaging for all regional initiatives such as economic development, tourism and lifestyle opportunities, and broadband and cell services.
- Continue to pursue collaborative opportunities **to achieve service and cost efficiencies and other economies** through cost-sharing and shared services.

#### Current and Potential Project Partners

- Townships
- City of Kingston
- Other counties
- CRCA, Public Health, CFDC, KFPL libraries, EOWC, EORN, & other partners



#### Other Important and Continuing County Priorities:

- Respect the taxpayer and keep **tax increases** close to the rate of inflation.
- Implement strategic plans for **Fairmount Home** and **Frontenac Paramedics**.
- Continually improve **customer and financial services**.
- Maintain a **strong organization and positive work culture** through leadership, human resources, training and development, physical and IT infrastructure, and partnerships.



**Extensive consultation** attracted online input from more than 210 residents across the Frontenacs (including 71 seasonal residents). Local consultations were conducted with each of the four township councils in public session. The process was also supported by media coverage.

## Overview of Strategy Development Process:

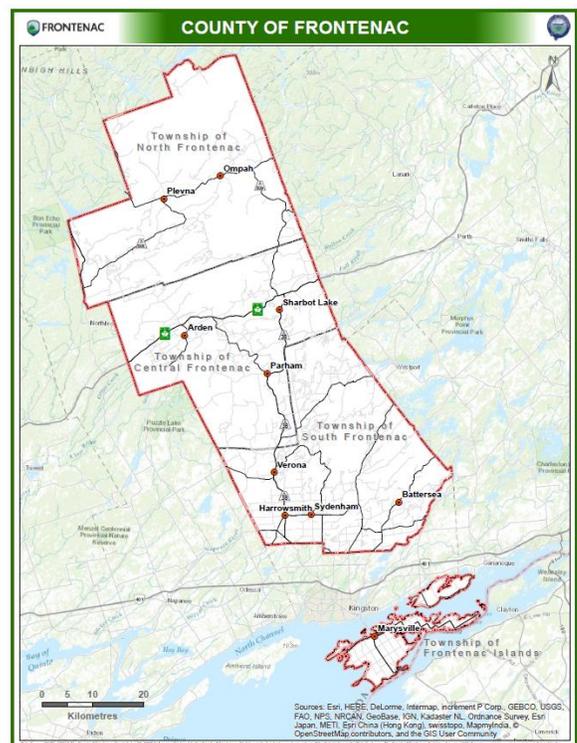
The strategy development process was launched in January 2019 with a “Commissioning” Session with County Council members.

Initial ideas, interests and concerns were further explored through background research, reviewing reports, business plans and related documents and a planning workshop with senior County staff in February.

Through late February and March, public consultation meetings were held with the four township councils in North, Central and South Frontenac and Frontenac Islands.

Extensive online input was received throughout March in response to a community survey promoted in all four township communities (more than 210 responses, including 71 from seasonal residents).

All of this input was compiled and presented to County Council as part of its half-day priority-setting workshop held March 27. Based on direction from that session, along with further follow-up work with staff, a draft plan was developed for review by Council May 15. The final revised draft was presented for approval June 19, 2019.



## A VISION for the County of Frontenac

A vision statement provides a clear and succinct description of goals for what the organization and/or community should look like once it achieves its full potential. It also involves a blend of aspirations that preserve "the core" while stimulating progress.

### As the County looks to the future, it envisions:

The County of Frontenac is committed to sustaining diverse, strong, and resilient rural communities known for their unique, pristine natural environment and lifestyle choices.

- The County is a vibrant community of diverse friendly people from all walks of life. The beauty of Frontenac is in the landscape but the strength is in its people, from the northern-most tip to the islands. These characteristics define our sense of place.
- The County aims to support the people of Frontenac and serve as the voice for our rural community lifestyle.
- The County of Frontenac facilitates those living, visiting and doing business to experience the diversity of the region and all that it has to offer in areas of tourism, agriculture, forestry, services and government.
- It also recognizes the unique and distinct characteristics of its four townships and how each contributes to the rich culture of the County.

### As a framework for strategic planning, this future vision incorporate goals related to:

- Working collaboratively with partners to resolve complex issues beyond individual mandates or jurisdictions.
- Expanding the network of broadband and cell services.
- Supporting community vitality through services, infrastructure, partnerships and innovation.
- Effective management of long-term care, emergency services, planning, community and economic development.
- Completing major capital projects related to Fairmount Home, Frontenac Paramedics and administrative offices.
- Building the County's organizational capacity in line with its mandate and accountabilities.
- Maintaining a sustainable financial framework that respects the taxpayer and manages risks.



### **Frontenac County's Balanced Scorecard**

Four key elements:

- Customer Focus
- Financial Performance
- Learning and Growth
- Process Improvement

## Forces for Change: Highlights from the Situation Analysis

Strategic priorities for Frontenac County have been developed within the context of its character, location and many issues creating opportunities as well as pressures for change.

### Some implications from online input/public consultations:

- There is an expectation that local government (either tier) will protect and enhance quality of life in local communities. Common sense approaches are expected. Residents are less concerned about which level of government delivers a particular service or addresses a particular problem — they just want it dealt with. There is often confusion about “who does what”, suggesting communications will be an ongoing need.
- The County is making strategic decisions within a general climate of uncertainty and change — in provincial/federal policy, funding and program expectations; economic and environmental trends; and changes in how we ‘look after ourselves and our neighbours’. The County must remain nimble — able and ready to react to changing political landscapes for some core services by monitoring provincial demands through regional networks and consultations with politicians, operating high quality services using best practices, and having a complete understanding of its revenues and expenditures to ensure County taxpayer interests are respected.
- Feedback conveyed a general, pragmatic desire for protection of the natural environment and a sense we should all ‘do our part’ in addressing impacts of climate change.
- There is a drive for greater efficiency in delivering public services together with tapping into new opportunities (especially using technology). This is coupled with a desire to preserve unique characteristics of each community and traditional ways of doing things.

**Municipalities across the County are feeling the weight of infrastructure maintenance**, with increasing pressures on finances (particularly for aging County facilities, including long-term care, administrative offices, land ambulance stations and land improvements). County strategy is also influenced significantly by funding from other levels of government.

**The county’s economic future is seen as more focused on smaller enterprises** and ‘local’ activity. Smaller businesses are also seen as a vital element of the community fabric with small shops providing amenities to supplement other local infrastructure such as schools. Community halls and volunteer groups contribute to the ‘community fabric’ too.

**Local demographic trends may be amplifying well-known challenges** (e.g. aging, leading to more healthcare and different housing needs; young people leaving for employment elsewhere; managing growth in new housing; or accessibility of vital services).

**Solutions to many issues transcend local government mandates** – waste management, a township responsibility, is just one example. Consultations indicated an emerging sense that the only way to deal effectively with these types of issues is to band together, using a common voice and economies of scale to effect change (to improve broadband and cell service, for example) and for common efforts in marketing/branding and development.

# 1

## Get behind plans that build community vitality and resilience in times of growth and change.

This priority responds to high interest as well as concern shared broadly across the County that communities in the Frontenacs be well supported with infrastructure and services essential to vitality and sustainability in today's world.

Filling gaps in broadband and cell service was a top concern identified in public consultations. Many pointed to economic activity, local employment and services provided by businesses as key ingredients for vitality. This strategy also responds to the pressures for managing growth, housing and development wisely, in ways that are sensitive to local values and priorities.

### Objectives in support of this strategy:

- Provide committed leadership and continuing support to the long-term regional plan to **enhance broadband and cell service**.
- Refine and invest in efforts to **accelerate economic development** — to grow businesses, attract more visits and expand the tax base.
- **Pursue proactive planning approaches** that reflect local concerns and priorities within strategic regional planning policy so as to enhance service levels, manage rising demand for new housing and deal with new types of development.

### Direction for Development of Operational Plans:

- It is understood that designing, costing and implementing connectivity/broadband projects is a long-term effort requiring years for preparation and implementation.
- The County will continue to support the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus, Eastern Ontario Leadership Council and EORN, which have made digital connectivity their top priority, especially as 'foundational' infrastructure for economic development.
- Current economic development initiatives relate to business expansion, investment attraction, supporting assessment growth, promoting the regional brand and advancing community improvement plans. Focus on the Economic Development Charter and the Ambassador and Trail Asset programs will continue. Recent pilot projects (such as the Open Farms local food awareness event) establish a basis for further progress.
- In planning, major policy reviews are pending (e.g. private roads, official plan updates, community improvement plans, secondary and servicing plans, population projections and the Communal Services study). Priorities include working collaboratively with townships to enhance service levels and implementing strategic regional planning.

# 2

## Explore new funding sources and invest in critical long-term infrastructure using sound judgement.

This priority speaks to significant future demands on the County's capital and operating budgets — the need to repair, reconstruct and/or replace aging service facilities and accelerate maintenance of other infrastructure.

For this term of Council, the strategy marks a commitment to begin long-term planning to secure new sources of external funding, explore options to meet County responsibilities for long-term care infrastructure/facilities, and find cost-effective ways to deal with long overdue space and maintenance needs for paramedics and administrative services.

### Objectives in support of this strategy:

- To meet the needs of future capital projects, **explore new sources of funding support** (current and future programs), cost-sharing options and other potential economies.
- Design a framework, explore options and initiate plans for development of a long-term care facility that will meet **Fairmount Home's** mandate.
- Develop plans within a changing legislative and service delivery landscape to provide additional facilities for **Frontenac Paramedics** that will effectively meet steadily growing demand for services and accommodate more paramedic training.
- Finalize plans and financing to replace/construct/renovate **aging County buildings** now used for administration services (through a shared admin facility if possible).
- Explore a collaborative upper-tier role for the County in **securing potential funding and support** for township maintenance of roads & bridges in a regional road system.

### Direction for Development of Operational Plans:

- Pressures for budget increases are being driven by increasing demand for services; inflationary, contracted and mandated costs; plus new government policies/regulations.
- Fairmount Home is a home of choice (more than 200 on the waiting list), but the building is aging and will require significant renovation by 2025. Maintenance costs are increasing, the septic system is aging, and electrical, plumbing and HVAC require significant repairs. Other changes will be required to adapt to changing care demands. Provincial funding and need for efficiencies may lead to a need for a larger size (e.g. minimum 160 beds).
- The County has been engaged for some time in exploring potential cost savings and other benefits by way of sharing rejuvenated administration office space with the CRCA.
- With debentures retiring in 2022, tax room for capital projects could increase. It may be time to review the .65% capital increment to assess its capacity to fund future projects.
- In Frontenac County, responsibility for roads and bridges lies with the townships. These services were devolved in 1998 with the County's restructuring agreement. Consultations with townships have raised the possibility of Frontenac County playing some role to help them access and maximize a share of upper government funding that may be available.

# 3

## Champion and coordinate collaborative efforts with partners to resolve complex problems otherwise beyond the reach of their individual mandates and jurisdictions.

As a priority for this term of Council, the County will provide leadership in coordinating joint action with townships, the City of Kingston and other partners to develop solutions to complex problems otherwise beyond the reach of their individual formal mandates and jurisdictions.

As opportunity or need arises from time to time, it will partner to develop **action-focused collaborations** of defined scope and duration to advocate for and implement solutions.

### Objectives in support of this strategy:

- Work with the townships, other municipalities and levels of government **on broad infrastructure issues** — ranging from environmental concerns to regional transportation strategies for residential, social and economic purposes, and access to funding.
- Play a **leadership role on communications** to promote shared messaging for all regional initiatives such as economic development, tourism and lifestyle opportunities, and broadband and cell services.
- Continue to pursue collaborative opportunities **to achieve service and cost efficiencies and other economies** through cost-sharing and shared services.

### Direction for Development of Operational Plans:

- This priority builds on past successes the County has had with a collaborative approach in promoting a County identity, sharing back-office functions with townships and other partners, and advancing the region’s interests externally through channels such as the Eastern Ontario Wardens’ Caucus.
- Consultation feedback suggested that consideration be given to “what works” and “who could best deliver” various services provided by the County, townships and the City. This might be a network/consortial model rather than a traditional, hierarchical approach, with a focus on leaner administration.
- The challenge will be to find the right balance between a) centralization and local/ partner autonomy, b) seizing collaborative opportunities without disrupting existing jurisdictions and responsibilities, c) finding payoffs for all the partners involved, and d) developing a sustainable model to enable the County to play such a role.



**Collaborative Leadership Opportunities**

- Transportation
- Promoting the Frontenacs
- Environmental awareness
- Waste Management
- Seeking funding
- Sharing services

## Implementation Overview:

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Strategy is activated through operational plans that provide more specific direction for the work and identify responsibilities and timelines — detailing who will do what by when.

The County of Frontenac will be developing specific workplans that respond to its future challenges and opportunities and translate the strategic priorities outlined above into ongoing activities and initiatives. Related best practices in the areas of budget strategy, risk management, change management, capacity building, partnership relations and policy development would also be employed.

### **Continuous Improvement:**

The County will continue to build a culture of continuous improvement through participation in Lean/Six Sigma projects at all levels of the organization. Regular reporting of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will also be used to reflect implementation of the strategic plan.

### **Communications:**

A successful roll-out of this strategic plan will depend on effective two-way communications and related efforts to develop understanding of its implications, both by internal audiences at the County as well as residents and ratepayers, employers, community partners, townships, the City of Kingston, and other levels of government.

### **Periodic Review:**

As with any well-managed implementation, progress on these strategic priorities will be reviewed regularly. Operational plans will be updated when necessary (as will the strategic plan itself, as appropriate from time to time).

This will help ensure the County of Frontenac continues to anchor its activities in the municipality's mission and vision, adapt to the latest evidence and best practices, and respond effectively to circumstances as they may change through 2022 and beyond.