

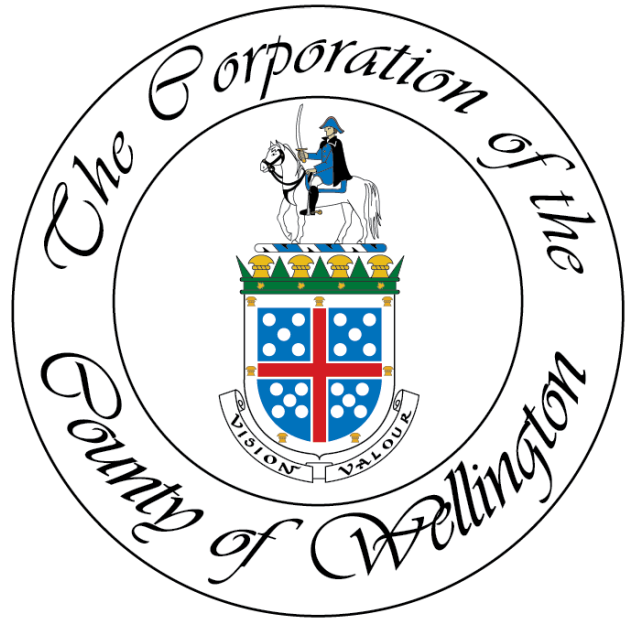
**FUTURE
FOCUSED.
PEOPLE
INVESTED.**

**STRATEGIC
ACTION PLAN**

For
WELLINGTON COUNTY



**FUTURE
FOCUSED.
PEOPLE
INVESTED.**



Wellington County

Strategic Action Plan

Prepared: June 2019

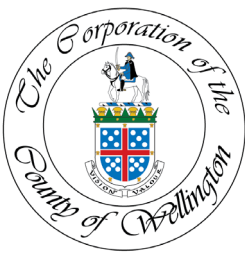


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Wellington County Strategic Action Plan

INTRODUCTION

What Wellington County is About

Wellington County, located in southwestern Ontario, serves a larger regional community made up of predominantly rural countryside with smaller settlement areas scattered throughout the County. Wellington County is in a unique position in that it has the City of Guelph centrally located within the County but acts as its own single-tier municipality.

With a population of over 90,000 residents, the County is home to 7 partner municipalities: Township of Centre Wellington; Township of Guelph/Eramosa; Township of Wellington North; Town of Erin; Township of Mapleton; Town of Minto; Township of Puslinch.

What the Corporation of the County of Wellington is About

The Corporation of the County of Wellington already does a lot of great things for their residents and businesses, but County leaders want to ensure that the County continues to provide the best services and infrastructure in the years to come.

The County takes pride in providing the best-valued and highest level of services to their residents and businesses including:

- **social services (long-term care, housing, daycare)**
- **libraries**
- **museum and archives**
- **maintaining county roads**
- **managing solid waste services**
- **garbage and recycling**
- **and planning and development services**

The County also provides services and works in partnership with:

- the City of Guelph to deliver services such as childcare, subsidized housing, and income support programmes; and





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- its municipal partners to ensure the County's economy remains one that is vibrant, diverse and resilient.

As a corporate organization, the County takes a progressive and opportunistic approach to getting things done. Staff and elected County Officials work closely together to ensure the right decisions are being made and the County is taking advantage of every opportunity to ensure the highest quality of life for the residents and businesses. An example of the County being an innovative and opportunistic organization is illustrated through the County, and its partner the City of Guelph, being recognized as a "Smart City". Through the *Our Food Future* initiative, the partnership has taken a smart cities approach "to improve the lives of their residents through innovation, data and connected technology".

As an employer, the County clearly values its employees and takes great pride in providing the best possible open and collaborative workplace, and environment, as evidenced by the numerous awards and accolades that have been won by the County.

What this Strategic Action Plan is About

As a true demonstration of collaboration, the process to develop this Strategic Action Plan engaged County senior staff and elected municipal leaders through an open and transparent environment.

Great things are already happening in the County. The aim of this action plan is not to change direction but instead offer suggestions to help strengthen the County's corporate culture, collaborative nature, cohesiveness and decision-making processes.

There are strong corporate values in place, and although not written everyone seems to understand the County is about serving people.

The plan is focusing on the current term of County Council and does not aim to focus on individual projects or opportunities. Instead, the plan is centred around how the County capitalizes on potential opportunities in the future. By putting in place mechanisms to ensure the current corporate culture continues will ensure the success of the future of the County.





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MESSAGE FROM THE WARDEN & CAO

We are proud to present the Wellington County Strategic Action Plan outlining the direction that the Corporation will be taking over the remaining Term of Council. The County is extremely fortunate in that it is set in naturally beautiful geography. It is a predominantly rural community offering a number of uniquely diverse urban centres with a small-town feel and passionate residents in the County.

This strategic action plan entitled **Future Focused. People Invested.** is a product and a true reflection of how the Corporation works – in an environment that promotes openness, trust and collaboration. Each Councillor and members of the County of Wellington senior management team contributed to the development and crafting of this plan by expressing their priorities in an open public forum and working as a cohesive team to help provide clarity on the County's strategic priorities.

We know that there are great things taking place in the County and this strategic action plan is building on the good things that are already existing. As staff and Council, we understand the need to serve our residents with dedication, progressive-thinking and excellence. We are committed to building a prosperous future for the community and always striving to make the community a better place to live, work and invest.

The Corporation will use this strategic action plan as an example of how the Corporation can continue to work together to plan and set the County's corporate priorities and to build a strong foundation for the County to move forward on.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kelly Linton".

Kelly Linton
Warden

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to read "Scott Wilson".

Scott Wilson
Chief Administration Officer





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WELLINGTON COUNTY 'VALUES'...

...VALUES PROVIDE DIRECTION FOR THE FUTURE

These County values help in defining "Who" the Corporation is and also represents "What" is guiding the Corporation.

Wellington County above all values:

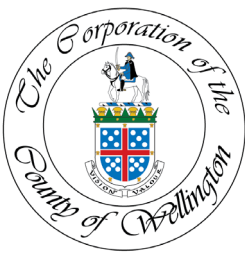
- **Personal well-being of its residents, employees, elected citizen representatives** – Wellington County understands that the People it serves, the People it employs and the People that help provide direction and guidance are what make the County special. They give it character and are ultimately the reason why the County is in business.
- **Openness and transparency in the decisions the County makes and how it conducts business** – Wellington County understands that to be successful in being the best at providing services and making decisions it needs to ensure they are working in an environment that promotes openness through trust and transparency. This also includes creating a corporate environment built around principles of inclusion and diversity.
- **Collaboration as a base for how the County works internally and with external partners** – Wellington County understands that it is better to work together as a cohesive team and with its partners instead of going it alone. True community success is built more effectively and most efficiently through collaboration and unison of efforts.
- **Responsibility for the County's future** – Wellington County understands that as an organization it is the gatekeeper to the County's future – a responsibility it does not take lightly. This also means the County is a good steward of the environment as it employs principles of sustainability in its daily operations and decision-making processes.

What does this mean?

This really means the County values People. And it will continue servicing people through its customer-centric approach. Whether it's:

- providing actual front-line people facing services
- planning for, building and maintaining vital pieces of infrastructure or
- preparing for the County for the future





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The County is always focusing on making the community a better place for the people that live, work, visit and invest.

This is achieved when Wellington County staff and Council share a willingness to work together for the betterment of the County. Strengthening and growing this relationship is key to any and all future success of the County. This includes how staff and Council are engaged, how decisions are made in an open and transparent environment and how the County communicates. The people currently in positions to lead the County (elected citizen representatives and staff) understand the need and demonstrate a strong willingness and desire to work closely together for the betterment of the County.

And finally, the County currently has the right people in place who are having a major positive impact on the existing culture and future direction of the County. This people-centric culture needs to be captured and communicated through the organization.

WELLINGTON COUNTY 'ASPIRATIONS'...

...ASPIRATIONS PROVIDE THE "WHAT" THE COUNTY DESIRES FOR THE FUTURE

These County aspirations illustrate what the County wants to continue to be in the future.

Wellington County will embrace its values as it aspires to...

Continuously work collaboratively to ensure the County has the:

- best **PEOPLE** in place to provide the best services and make the best decisions
- best **PROCESSES** in place to collectively make the best decisions
- best **SERVICES** in place to service the County's residents and businesses
- best **INFRASTRUCTURE** in place to meet the current and future needs of the community



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STRATEGIC ACTIONS

STRATEGIC ACTIONS PROVIDE THE "HOW" FOR THE COUNTY TO REALIZE ITS ASPIRATIONS

Wellington County's Top 5 Priority Activities for this term of Council

To achieve its aspirations the County should consider these top activities as priorities to be undertaken in this Term of County Council:

1. Continue engaging staff to craft a **WELLINGTON COUNTY HUMAN RESOURCE PLAN**
2. Begin implementing The City of Guelph and Wellington County's **OUR FOOD FUTURE INITIATIVE**
3. Creating a **LONG-TERM WELLINGTON COUNTY FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY PLAN**
4. Creating a new **LONG-TERM ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN**
5. Enhancing the County's decision-making process by providing, as an initial step, an **INFORMATION PIECE** outlining "WHY" the project/opportunity/initiative is important

The following pages outline additional strategic actions broken down into the following priority areas:

People as the Main Priority of Wellington County

Making the Best Decisions

Providing the Highest Level & Best Quality Services

Planning for and Providing the Best Physical Infrastructure





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PEOPLE AS THE MAIN PRIORITY OF WELLINGTON COUNTY

Why Is This Important?

People provide an organization with its talent, give an organization its unique character and ultimately give an organization its humanistic qualities. People set the tone and the corporate culture of an organization and without people – the right people – the Corporation of the County of Wellington would be governed differently, run differently, and act/interact with its taxpayers completely differently.

As a strategic priority it is paramount that the County safeguard its main driving force – its people – to ensure as an organization, it can continue to be built around the most talented and driven staff complement in order to be the best place to work and ultimately driven by providing the best service to its customers/taxpayers.

The County is in existence to serve its taxpayers. By ensuring the County, as an organization is built around the best people, and values its people, then, in turn, the County will have the best staff to be able to provide the best and most effective services to its taxpayers.

What We Heard

- People are and will remain the County's main priority and number 1 asset whether it be County residents, employees or elected citizen representatives
- Consistently we heard that the County takes employee overall health and well being very serious and is a corporate focus
- The County has a strong positive corporate culture, but the Wellington County corporate culture is not documented anywhere
- The County has an opportunity to build diversity, openness and acceptance into its corporate culture
- The County's demographic profile indicates a growing population is becoming skewed toward an ageing population. This, in turn, is resulting in an increase in housing prices and a reduction in available labour to support the economy





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Strategic Actions – People as a Priority

1. Create a Wellington County Human Resource Plan which could include components such as:
 - a. Creating a Wellington County employee mental health and well-being support and training program (i.e. Guarding Minds as an initiative). Once created, share as a model with municipal and community partners.
 - b. Defining, documenting and instilling the Wellington County corporate culture
 - c. Creating opportunities to build cultural diversity, openness and inclusion into the County's corporate culture
 - d. Developing the best methods to achieve optimal staff and Council engagement and communication
 - e. Succession planning and the engagement of young professionals through the use of internships and work placements
2. Initiate a resident retention and attraction program through a Housing Action Plan including housing to support ageing in place (i.e. Continuum of Care), first time or entry-level attainable housing and appropriate social housing.





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MAKING THE BEST DECISIONS

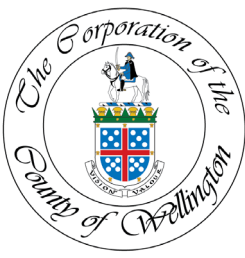
Why Is This Important?

Historically, Wellington County has taken an opportunistic view when approaching new ventures or activities that may positively impact the community – this is something that needs to continue both in terms of being part the County's corporate culture as well as how the County makes decisions. Currently, there is a decision-making process in place. This process works and allows the County to be nimble and quickly respond to both issues and opportunities that arise. This decision-making process allows all County staff and subject matter experts, the public and County Council an opportunity to get involved in public-facing decisions. It is important that everyone is involved in the decision-making process and understands the impacts of the County's decision, and the "Why" they are making these decisions.

What We Heard

- The County does have in place an open and transparent decision-making process that does include all decision-makers in the decision-making process.
- Consistently we heard that the County has the ability and corporate culture in place to quickly act upon issues and opportunities that arise. This ability and corporate culture need to remain as a way of doing business for the County.
- Occasionally some County Councillors felt that they do not have enough information or are not included early enough in the decision-making process to be a part of the decision-making process but instead are merely providing a "rubber-stamp" decision.
- One size, in terms of addressing County issues or services, does not always fit all Municipal partners.
- Improvements can be made in early-stage communications and provide context – the "why" the County is considering or studying a specific project or initiative.





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Strategic Actions – Decision Making

1. As an initial step in the decision-making process for any major capital projects or initiatives that potentially will change how the County does business requires a briefing note/white paper style report be prepared and shared with staff and Council. The aim of the brief information report is to set the context at the very beginning of the decision-making process, provides the "why" the project/initiative is being considered and offers messaging to help staff and County Council best articulate "why" the County is examining this project or initiative.
2. To best orient Council (new and old) on how the County functions; as well as the projects the County is involved in; consider expanding the Council orientation sessions to various periods within the Term of Council.
3. To assist in the decision-making process for major capital projects, establish a set of benchmarks or criteria from which the County can base its decisions.





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PROVIDING THE HIGHEST LEVEL & BEST QUALITY SERVICES

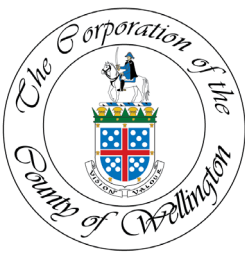
Why Is This Important?

Wellington County is in the business of providing services to its residents and businesses – its taxpayers. What the County provides are supports and services that positively impact the daily lives of its residents such as childcare, libraries, long term care housing, social support, and solid waste disposal and management. Without these services, most County residents and businesses would find day to day living a challenge. The County takes its role as service provider very seriously.

What We Heard

- The County does a very good job of providing an enhanced level of services to its residents and businesses
- The County partners with the City of Guelph in the provision of some services
- One size does not fit all in terms of providing municipal partners (urban and rural) with the level of services their communities require (i.e. solid waste collection)
- It is essential that the County maintain its high level of service delivery standards as major investments have been made into County infrastructure such as libraries, long-term care facilities, etc.
- Funding for some services is tied closely with Provincial programs and funding envelopes. As such, allocating some funding to programs is out of the County's immediate control
- Solid waste contracts are soon coming to an end and the County is in a position to more closely examine the level of service it provides around solid waste collection and disposal





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Strategic Actions – Service Delivery

1. Implement the County's Solid Waste Services Strategy.
2. Through the County's Solid Waste Services Strategy, re-examine solid waste collection to ensure the collection and management needs of the County and its Municipal partner communities (urban and rural) collection and disposal needs.
3. As a part of the Long-Term Wellington County Financial Sustainability Plan ensure the assets owned, and the accompanying services provided by the County (i.e. libraries, long-term care, etc.) are accounted and planned for the long term.





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PLANNING FOR AND PROVIDING THE BEST PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Why Is This Important?

Hard physical infrastructure in Wellington County primarily means roads and bridges, and the County builds, maintains and plans for a lot of kilometres worth of roads and hundreds of bridges. This type of infrastructure is the physical backbone of the County, crucial to ensuring the movement of people and hard goods into, around and out of the County. Without this infrastructure, the County and its taxpayers would physically and literally be cut off from the rest of the world.

Infrastructure also means the number of buildings and facilities owned, operated and maintained by the County. Whether a building of historical significance or a new modern facility, each building the County is responsible for comes with a cost and series of life cycle maintenance and upgrades to consider.

Providing for this infrastructure places high demands on both the County's staffing and financial resources. Unfortunately, due to the limited life cycle of this type of physical infrastructure, there will continue to be high levels of pressure put on the County's financial resources as it strives to ensure the proper development, maintenance and replacement of these community assets. It is therefore paramount that the County plan for and adequately finance this critical backbone.

Two other pieces of infrastructure that are critically important to the County, but not traditionally a County responsibility are accessibility and affordable highspeed broadband and the provision of housing. These types of infrastructure play an important role in how the County's residents and businesses go about their daily functions.

What We Heard

- Hard infrastructure represents essential community assets that are expensive to plan for, build, maintain and replace/rebuild.
- The County has over \$1.2 billion worth of assets amongst several different asset classes, two of which are roads and bridges
- The County is:
 - responsible for a large inventory of roads and bridges that service the area
 - responsible for a large inventory of buildings and facilities





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- facing a funding deficit in terms of being able to pay for future maintenance and replace/rebuilding of its current inventory of roads, bridges, buildings and facilities
- The County has in the past completed an Asset Management Plan
- The County does:
 - through its current annual budget process, plan for infrastructure maintenance, upgrades and life cycle replacement but are not able to keep up to the current life cycle demands
 - a good job at being fiscally responsible and has one of the highest credit ratings and works hard at ensuring it continually meets its budget targets.
- Treasury staff have drafted a Long-Term Financial Sustainability Strategy for approval by Council
- The lack of continuous broadband throughout the County (not unlike any other rural areas in Canada) makes communications to its residents and businesses challenging for the County
- Some areas of the County are impacted more severely in terms of being underserved by broadband
- County employers are finding it challenging to attract and retain the necessary workforce needed to sustain the economy
- Issues surrounding both attainable housing and accessible broadband are making it difficult to retain and attract young people and families to the region

Strategic Actions – Best Physical Infrastructure

1. The County should continue investing in its asset management planning processes by:
 - a. Creating a new Long-Term Asset Management Plan based on best management practices and guided by principles of long-term financial sustainability
 - b. Linking the new Asset Management Plan with the annual budget process and the 10-year planning process
 - c. If needed, allocating new resources to support the new Asset Management Plan rollout and implementation
 - d. Examining upgrading of the County's IT systems to better assist in asset management planning





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2. Continue building a Long-Term Financial Sustainability Plan that addresses how to fund the new Long-Term Asset Management Plan
3. Continue to collaborate with the County's Municipal partners in building the business case and implementation plan for the rollout of broadband throughout underserved areas of the County
4. Partner with those County Municipal partners that are most impacted by the attainable housing issue to best understand the issues of cost and availability and create a Housing Action Plan.
5. Undertake a best-use business case for Wellington Place to better understand the best uses and those that provide the highest positive local and regional impacts
6. Examine the County's existing IT systems to ensure it meets the future needs of the County in terms of new functions around data storage, security and sharing

