



TOWN OF GANDER

a place to
BELONG



town of gander
STRATEGIC PLAN

2021-2025

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MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

On behalf of Council, I am pleased to present the 2021-2025 Town of Gander Strategic Plan, a living document describing and supporting our vision of remaining a progressive and vibrant community with a strong sense of belonging.

Within this plan you will find the enduring values that guide our work as Council. Based on these values, combined with feedback from the community, we have proposed seventeen specific strategies across five guiding pillars. We believe that by following this approach, in a fiscally responsible manner, we will continue to advance our mission to create a progressive and inclusive community that enriches the quality of life for all our residents by maintaining an attractive, safe, healthy and inviting environment.

The values and strategic priorities identified in this plan will serve as the decision-making foundations for policies, programs and investments, comprising annual workplans and budgets of the municipality going forward.

As your Council, we are committed to continually improving our community and we invite you to engage with us and be a part of this journey. Together we will continue to build our prosperous and thriving community.

Sincerely,

Mayor Percy Farwell



INTRODUCTION

Strategic planning is one of the most important tools a municipality can use to bring together the public, municipal staff and members of Council in the development of a common vision, direction and set of goals for the community. Strategic planning also functions as an accounting mechanism, allowing management and the public to evaluate progress and ensure that the municipality is moving in the right direction.

The Town of Gander completed a five-year Strategic Plan in 2015. A majority of the objectives in that plan were achieved, including major upgrades to our waste/storm water collection system and a new \$32M wastewater treatment facility. Other noteworthy successes include major overhauls and upgrades to the mechanical systems at the Steele Community Centre and Water Treatment Plant and the completion of a Recreation Master Plan. These achievements came at significant cost and resulted in financial pressures which will shape our decisions for the foreseeable future.



As an aviation community, regional service centre and preferred convention and sport tournament venue, the effect of the pandemic on Gander has been severe. The downturn in global air travel has resulted in reduced traffic at Gander International Airport and the near elimination of domestic air service. NAV Canada, one of our community's largest private employers, has been forced to make staffing cuts. Small independent businesses have suffered through extended shop closure orders. These

enterprises are the backbone of our economy and will likely face a challenging and extended recovery once the pandemic subsides.

Our plan focuses on navigating difficult times and restoring our local economy. Importantly, we are continuing to make significant commitments to strengthening our town in every way so that all who live here can share in our unique sense of Gander pride and communality.



COMMUNITY PROFILE

The Town of Gander is a modern and progressive community, a preferred service centre for more than 80,000 people in some 130 communities within a 100km radius.

With a population of 11,688 (Statistics Canada 2016 census), Gander offers a host of recreational opportunities both for tourists and residents. The Town supports and operates many parks, hiking trails, playgrounds and recreational programs year-round. Major facilities include a multi-purpose hockey arena, a curling club and an 18-hole golf course that sprawls over a pristine country setting. Nearby Gander River is a world class waterway offering thrilling adventures and superb angling. Gander Lake, the town's water supply, provides the cleanest drinking water in the Province.



Gander's main economic industries include transportation, communications, education, public administration and defense. More than 350 storefront businesses have made their home in Gander with an additional 80+ enterprises registered in the home-based business sector. Retail sales in the Town of Gander are estimated to be 2.5 times the national average for communities of comparable size and are fast approaching half a billion dollars annually.

Gander is home to Gander International Airport and 9 Wing CFB Gander which includes 103 Search and Rescue Squadron.

VISION STATEMENT

Gander will continue to be a progressive and vibrant community with a strong sense of belonging, the hub community of the Kittiwake Coast.

MISSION STATEMENT

Our Mission at the Town of Gander is to foster a progressive and inclusive community which enriches the quality of life for all our residents by maintaining an attractive, safe, healthy and



inviting environment. We pledge to work in partnership with our residents and stakeholder groups to plan for the future, foster community pride, develop a vibrant and diversified economy and to preserve and enhance the natural beauty of our environment.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

These guiding principles outline the foundation for all the work we do and act as a decision-making lens as we work toward our vision.

Fiscally Responsible

We are focused on fiscally responsible core service delivery. In order to ensure the long-term financial health of our municipality we must balance our needs and expectations with our financial means and be proactive and innovative in keeping our services affordable. We will continue to make informed decisions to ensure a sound financial future.

Open and Transparent

We are committed to operating in an open, accessible and transparent manner. We will continue to improve how we inform, engage, and listen to residents and stakeholders. Performance measures will ensure we stay on track and remain accountable for results.

Partner and Collaborate

We look for opportunities to partner to advance our common goals. We strengthen our relationships with external organizations and our community partners to collaborate on projects and services. We support innovation and creative ideas. We work with all levels of government to maximize taxpayer investments.

Service Excellence

We serve our community with pride and seek to understand and meet the needs of those we serve. We are committed to accessible, knowledgeable, courteous and fair service. We value feedback and use what we learn to better serve our residents.



OUR VALUES

We believe in:

Accountability - We are responsible and accountable for our actions. We follow up and follow through.

Innovation - We maintain open minds to foster creativity and better ways of accomplishing objectives.

Diversity - We value diversity and inclusion in all that we do, think and pursue.

Responsiveness - We strive to engage our residents and respond in a timely manner. We are flexible to address the ever-changing priorities of our community.

Integrity - We promote trust, honesty and respect in our relationships. We are consistent, empathetic and fair.

Teamwork - We work together as a community and engage others to maximize our strengths and pursue opportunities for growth.

PILLARS AND STRATEGIES

The foundation of our commitment for the next five years is based on the following economic and social pillars - Ensuring Gander's long-term fiscal sustainability; maintaining the quality and delivery of municipal services; ensuring all residents, regardless of physical, social or economic challenges, can equally access and enjoy municipal services; working to lessen our impact on the climate and our environment; and supporting and encouraging local businesses as they move through and beyond the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

1. Fiscal Sustainability

Through informed and strategic financial decisions, Council will work to ensure our long-term fiscal sustainability and continue to provide a full range of core and discretionary services while maintaining financial obligations on promised expenditures. Our key strategies are:



Strategy 1: Debt Reduction

We will adopt a balanced debt reduction plan that will reduce the debt servicing to revenue ratio to 15% or less by the end of 2024. This will be accomplished through the use of annual spending caps, improved operational efficiency, decreased dependency on borrowing and service level adjustments.

Strategy2: Sustainable and Affordable Infrastructure

With a goal of achieving maximum return, capital investments in roads, water and sewer infrastructure and recreation facilities will focus on extending their life and usability. A robust asset management program coupled with aggressive preventative maintenance and timely upgrades will form the foundation of sustainability.

Strategy 3: Alternative Revenue Generation

We will actively pursue new non-tax-based revenue sources as a means of offsetting municipal operations, programming and capital investments and paying down existing debt. Revenues generated through sponsorship opportunities, accessing green project funding and “Regional Fee for Service” arrangements will be used to reduce borrowing or as direct payment toward outstanding loans.

Strategy 4: Efficiency Through Partnership

Year over year, the increasing cost of maintaining programs and services challenges their continued delivery and limits the introduction of new ones. Building on our success through supporting local recreation and community services groups, we will seek opportunities to form strategic partnerships that lead to more efficient and cost-effective ways of delivering programs and services.

2. Enhanced Service Delivery

We recognize the importance of providing residents, business owners and community stakeholders with a full slate of required and discretionary services in a transparent, professional, timely, cost effective and consistent manner. Our key strategies are:



Strategy 1: Performance Measurement

In accordance with recommendations arising from KPMG’s 2021 Operations and Organizational Review, we will develop and communicate a set of key performance indicators to track operations and the delivery of services to ensure they meet the benchmarked standards of best practices.

Strategy 2: Service Delivery Optimization

We will systematically review each municipal service to determine the most appropriate means to provide them. This will include exploring a range of service delivery methods including contracting out, contracting in and public-private partnerships. The objective is to improve service delivery by communicating effectively, providing better customer service and operating more efficiently.

Strategy 3: Red Tape Reduction

Streamlining municipal regulatory and approval processes is an organization-wide priority. Through regulatory reform we will reduce the burden on small business, streamline the bureaucratic process and ensure regulatory requirements are clear and communicated in plain language. A majority of the procedural and regulatory reform work will be completed by the end of 2024.

3. Inclusion and Accommodation

Recognizing diversity within ourselves and our community allows us to understand the ways in which multiple factors influence how we provide services, design policies and programs and interact with our residents. Through equity and inclusion, Gander will continue to be a “*Place to Belong*”. Our key strategies are:

Strategy 1: Special Circumstance Accommodation

Town of Gander by-laws and regulations were developed to protect the safety and quality of life of all residents, businesses and community stakeholders. For some individuals with special needs or extenuating circumstances, compliance is not possible or may even be detrimental to their well-being. All by-laws and regulations will be reviewed and amended where necessary to ensure Council has the discretion and latitude to accommodate the needs of all residents.



Strategy 2: Accessible by Design

Full consideration for accessibility and inclusiveness will be fundamental in the design of municipal infrastructure and the development and delivery of programs. Our goal is that all municipal services, programs and opportunities will be available and accessible to every resident regardless of gender, physical ability, age, cultural or socio-economic differences.

Strategy 3: Embracing Diversity

By acknowledging differences in culture, lifestyles, views, beliefs, ideas, life experiences, skills and knowledge we will encourage tolerance and inclusion, the foundation for a welcoming community and a place where all residents share a sense of belonging.

4. Mitigating Climate Change



We recognize that global emissions of carbon dioxide from human activity has a negative effect on climate and our environment, leading to the warming of our planet over time. This change is effectively irreversible according to the scientific community without action today. What we do or fail to do now may be consequential for generations to come. As community leaders we are considering how our decisions and actions impact the environment and we are proactively working to lessen the

effect of our community's activities while continuing to take advantage of potential new opportunities. Our key strategies include:

Strategy 1: Adaptation

Through adaptation we will undertake initiatives and measures to reduce our vulnerability and the negative impact of actual or expected climate change effects. This includes updating policies as needed, ensuring efficient land use planning, and maintaining our high standard of infrastructure design, technologies and operating procedures.



Strategy 2: Energy Reduction

We remain committed to energy reduction and the greening of our municipal infrastructure. Building on the success of our “Infrastructure renewal and sustainability project” we will continue exploring means and investing in technologies to reduce our overall energy consumption and dependence on non-renewal resources. Opportunities to be considered include the use of wind and solar energy generation and transitioning vehicles to hybrid and electric units where possible.

5. Economic Recovery and Growth

The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on Gander’s economy has been measured and significant, particularly for small independent businesses and the aviation sector. Economic recovery and positioning our community for growth will be our top economic development priority. Our key strategies are:

Strategy 1: Business Retention and Recovery

We will work closely with local and regional businesses and the aviation sector as they recover and pursue new opportunities that will emerge. We are committed to continued advocacy on behalf of affected stakeholders, red tape reduction and special projects to stimulate economic activity.

Strategy 2: Tourism Product Development

Focusing on Gander’s proud aviation history, we will work with local, Provincial and Federal heritage, culture and hospitality sector stakeholders to develop and market our unique world class tourism experience. Our goal is to support and grow the regional tourism industry while simultaneously becoming a destination of choice for tourists.



Strategy 3: Maintaining and Building Community Capacity

We will work to ensure Gander has the services and supports in place to build and maintain a vibrant economy. Our focus will be securing new commercial land, access to healthcare, reliable air access and the availability of essential utilities.



Strategy 4: Special Event Hosting

We will actively promote Gander as the destination of choice for regional and provincial event planners and tournament organizers. In support of this, we are committed to making strategic investments through maintaining, upgrading and expanding our recreation and event hosting facilities.



Strategy 5: Attracting Remote Workers

We believe that proven advances in online communications and workflow systems present new opportunities for our community. For many, working from home is now a reality and provides a chance for a more balanced work/home life. We will position Gander to attract remote workers and telecommuters working in a range of sectors, provincially, nationally and internationally.

IMPLEMENTATION

Strategic plans set priorities and overall direction for a community. Implementation of activities to meet the goals of the community is the responsibility of Council and the senior management team. Departmental action plans must be consistent with the direction set forth in this document, have achievable goals and measurable outcomes, and be within the financial and human resources means of the organization.



MEASUREMENT AND REPORTING

In order to ensure we are meeting our guiding principles, we will be measuring our efforts and reporting regularly on our progress.

ANNUAL REVIEW

Our plan is a living document and will be reviewed and updated every year as part of the annual budget preparation process.

