



TOWNSHIP OF
**North
Kawartha**

Connecting Community,
Nature and Spirit

Strategic Economic Development Plan





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1.0 Vision

A united and healthy community connected to our natural heritage

2.0 Core Purpose

Provide leadership, education, infrastructure, and cost-effective resources to ensure sustainable rural and urban growth

3.0 Corporate Values

We will be consistent with our Corporate values in everything we do:

Respect Consideration | Collaboration | Friendliness | Optimism

Integrity Loyalty | Dedication

Accountability Efficiency | Competency | Transparency

Executive Summary

This Strategic Economic Development Plan represents the first formal economic development plan for the Township of North Kawartha. Extensive consultations were conducted with a range of community stakeholders in order to understand the issues and concerns of ratepayers and businesses. Consultation tactics included 1:1 depth-interviews, Zoom & Phone calls, written submissions, as well as a formal public meeting. A special thanks to all those community members who've participated in the development of this plan. This plan prioritizes 5 key areas of focus for the Municipality: Development, Infrastructure, Labour, Tourism, and Economic Diversification. These five strategic areas of focus address the immediate, and long term economic needs of the Township. Together with our partners, community groups, and the private sector, we will embark on building an inclusive, sustainable economy for the Township.

The placemat graphic on the next page provides a snapshot of the Strategic Economic Development Plan for reference. At present, we're in stage 3 of the provinces COVID19 reopening framework. Given the uncertainty surrounding when pandemic restrictions will lift, objectives have been given a s - Short, M - Medium, and L - Long term time frame rather than a specific date.

Vision

A united and healthy community, connected to our natural heritage



Core Purpose

Provide leadership, education, infrastructure, and cost-effective resources to ensure sustainable rural, and urban growth

Development	Infrastructure	Labour	Tourism	Ec. Diversification
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Residential Development2. Residential Intensification3. Employment Lands4. Mixed used zoning5. Master Plan6. Innovation in housing	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Communal Servicing2. VIA Rail (HFR)3. Internet & Cell Service4. Transit5. ORV Access on County Roads	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Partnership w. Fleming College2. Partnership w. Trent University3. Supporting Entrepreneurship4. Home Based Businesses5. Rural & Northern Immigration Pilot	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Township Branding2. Short-term Rentals3. Visitor Accommodation Tax4. Marketing & Communications Plan5. Partnership for "signature" event	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Investment Strategy2. Community Engagement- Seasonal Residents3. Business Hub

Foundational Pieces

1. Service Delivery Review
2. Review of Comprehensive Zoning By-laws
3. Reduce Red Tap and streamline approval processes
4. Positioning the Township as a Trusted Business Partner with Developers and Investors

Environmental Scan

It's important that the Township have an understanding of some of the major external factors that have a direct, and in-direct impact on the Townships local economy. Although outside of our direct control, topics such as interest rates, debt, inflation, housing, child care and fiscal policy all have implications for our local economy. This section will review, at a high level, some of the major indicators that the Township needs to be cognizant of.

Fiscal Snapshot (Ontario)

Ontario has provided a 3-year fiscal outlook as part of the 2021-22 budget. In reviewing the budget, the province has made some assumptions with respect to revenues and program expenditures over the medium term (2021-22 – 2023-24). The provinces fiscal projections show revenue levels returning close to pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2021-22, with PIT (personal income tax) being the largest revenue source for the province. This scenario assumes that employment levels return close to pre-pandemic levels this fiscal year. As we enter a fourth wave of COVID19, large portions of the economy will continue to face restrictions, and there is the looming possibility for a backwards regression in the provinces reopening framework. Major portions of the economy including: travel, hospitality, tourism, sports & entertainment will likely face pandemic related restrictions for the foreseeable future. With enhanced EI benefits, and sector specific COVID19 restrictions, employment returning to pre-pandemic levels before the end of the fiscal year seems unlikely.

For Municipalities, the risk is if COVID restrictions continue past the end of this fiscal year, the province has very little allocated for additional supports that will be needed to help municipalities deal with increased costs, and lost revenues. The Federal & Provincial Governments have provided funding for Municipalities to deal with the impacts of COVID19, but there is no guarantee for how long the will funding last.

Net Debt (Ontario)

Ontario's net debt sits at 450 billion for fiscal year 2021-22. Ontario has run a deficit every year since 2008-09, and plans to run deficits of 27.7 Billion in 2022-23, and 20.2 Billion in 2023-24. Interest on debt (13.1 Billion) is now the fourth largest expenditure behind health, education, and social service spending in the province. For context, interest on debt is more than twice the annual budget of the MTO (6.2 Billion). Over the medium & long term, the province will need to make tough decisions with respect to revenue generation, and program expenditures. Ontario's next provincial election is scheduled for June 2022. The outcome of that election will have impact on Municipalities in the province. Municipalities with healthy reserves, and strong balance sheets will be better suited to deal with the volatility that comes with a pandemic, and a potential change in government spending priorities.

Credit Rating (Ontario)

Similar to your own personal finances, a government's credit rating plays a vital role in their ability to borrow money to fund deficit spending. The major ratings agencies undertake a comprehensive review of the provinces finances and provide a credit rating based on factors such as: risk, revenues, expenditures, liabilities, liquidity, and debt. Ontario's credit rating is A+ and AA- respectively (fourth and fifth highest rating). Lenders price risk. The lower your credit rating, the greater the risk you are to creditors, and the more it costs to service your debt. If Ontario's credit rating is downgraded, you may start to see higher borrowing costs as a result. COVID19 will continue to put a major strain on the Provinces finances for at least another 12 months. Based on the provinces own fiscal outlook, there is little money allocated for COVID19 programs and supports beyond this fiscal year. The Province may have trouble maintaining their current credit rating should there be a sudden change in the aforementioned indicators. The risk for Municipalities is if it becomes more expensive for the Province to meet their minimum debt service obligations, there will be less funding for program expenditures.

Labor Force

The Township's reliance on tourism and seasonal residents to drive its local economy mean many of the jobs supporting these businesses are part time, and seasonal in nature. Construction, retail, and hospitality/tourism continue to be the largest sectors for the Township's local economy. Access to labor continues to be a major challenge for businesses in the Township. Labor shortages in the Township can be attributed to three major themes:

1. Enhanced EI benefits and a lack of incentives for workers to return to work are keeping people at home, and out of the workforce
2. Lack of available housing, especially rental and affordable housing anywhere in the Township means people who would be interested in living and working in the Township can't.
3. 100 percent reliance of having to drive large distances for often part-time, seasonal work make it uneconomical for potential workers outside of the Township to consider working in North Kawartha.

Employment Insurance (EI)

COVID19 has demonstrated the need to overhaul and modernize the EI system in Canada. Overwhelmed by the volume of workers applying for EI, the Federal Government introduced the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) as a temporary backstop to shore up the failing EI system at the onset of the pandemic. Additional programs like the Canada Recovery Benefit were introduced to provide support for those who wouldn't normally qualify for EI, and were falling through the cracks. It's clear the current EI system is outdated, and doesn't reflect how Canadians work in the 21st century. Gig workers, self-employed Canadians, seasonal workers, independent contractors have all largely been excluded or marginalized by the current EI system. Given the high number of seasonal businesses in the Township, modernizing the EI system to better support seasonal workers will be critical for retaining our workforce in North Kawartha. Seasonal workers were particularly vulnerable during the first round of COVID19 lockdowns.

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Many of their benefits were set to expire in the spring of 2020, right as the businesses they work for were placed into lockdown, saw substantial loss of revenue, or scaled back their operations. Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) is responsible for administering the EI program. ESDC has committed to undertaking a 2-year consultation on modernizing the EI system. Structural changes to the EI system including better protections for seasonal workers, as well as rewarding those that are reentering the workforce instead of penalizing them will have a positive impact on workers, and businesses in the Township. The Township, along with its partners should actively participate in the consultation process to ensure workers and businesses in rural/remote and seasonal regions are adequately represented.

Housing

The concept of “affordable” housing is quickly becoming a thing of the past. The lack of affordable housing, and rental housing continues to be one of the biggest challenges for the Township. Since 2015, only 35 net new dwellings have been constructed in North Kawartha (this includes both seasonal residential, and year round housing). COVID19 has placed upward pressure on housing prices in rural areas at almost twice the rate of the GTA, as demand skyrocketed for those looking to leave Cities during the pandemic. The average sale price as of July 2021 for property in Peterborough & The Kawartha’s is 624K. The housing crisis cannot be solved at the Municipal level alone; support from the Province and Federal government are needed in terms of policy, and investments. The Township needs to work with stakeholders to promote housing policies that address both the supply & demand side of the equation. Municipalities need to work with developers to build more houses, quickly. We also need to curb unproductive demand by tackling issues like Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and cracking down on speculative real estate practices. At present, the Township has an effective rental vacancy rate of 0% in the Township. This means there are currently no long term rental’s available in the Township.

Inflation

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) measures the price increases for a specific basket of goods over a set period of time. In September 2021, Statistics Canada reported inflation reached 4.1%. This means the cost for everyday items like food, gas, and housing are increasing at an alarming rate. The Bank of Canada’s (BOC) key monetary policy since the early 1990’s has been to keep inflation between 1-3%. The BOC’s mandate is up in December 2021, and the newly elected federal government will need to negotiate a new mandate with the BOC. High inflation always disproportionately affects low income families who don’t have extra funds to pay for the increasing costs of essential items. Given the recent loss the Township’s only full service Grocery store to a fire, the long distances needed to travel to get groceries only compounds this. Good monetary policy keeps inflation in check.

Interest Rates

One of the biggest risk to the economy is a rise interest rates before households, government and business reduce their debt to income ratios. Interest rates haven't recovered since the global recession of 2007-2008, and remain well below historical averages. Although Canadians have been paying down some higher interest revolving credit products during the pandemic (credit cards, lines of credit), Canadians are taking on increasingly large mortgages, pushing total household debt higher. The era of cheap credit can't continue forever. The BOC has indicated they intend to keep the key overnight lending rate of 0.25% through 2023 in order to maintain stability. When your minimum debt service obligations increase without a corresponding increase in income, your ability to save or spend on discretionary items is diminished. Consumer spending is by far the largest driver of the Canadian economy. There is a real risk to the economy if interest rates increase before governments, households, and businesses reduce their debt to income ratios.

Schools & Daycare

Keeping schools, and child care open will be a critical component of the recovery from COVID19. School & day care closures disproportionately affect women, and particularly women that live in rural areas where child care options are limited or non-existent. The province has been clear during the pandemic that they want schools to be the last thing closed, and first to open in the event of a lockdown. Keeping schools open will be critical in allowing workers, particularly women to reenter the workforce. Too often workers need to reduce their hours, or need to stop working all together in order to meet their immediate child care needs. This is a deterrent to both businesses and workers in the Township. The Township has (1) licensed child care center and (1) school. The child care center was already the source of a COVID19 outbreak this year, highlighting the real risks that another outbreak could shut down the child care center or school.

Development

Prioritizing the right forms of development will be critical for the long term success of the Municipality. For too long, new development in the Township has largely centered around building seasonal residential dwellings along the waterfront. In order to grow the Township's local economy, we need to grow our permanent population. This means shifting our focus away from the waterfront, to focus on building housing inland. The Township needs to ensure that the right mix of housing is being constructed in order to support proper growth.

A lack of infrastructure like municipal water & sewer, Internet, and gas are major inhibitors to new residential & commercial development. Given the low population density, and vast geographic size, Township owned services like water and sewer aren't feasible. However, priority can be given to communal servicing where appropriate to promote intensification and new development. Introducing mixed use zoning, discouraging urban sprawl, and promoting innovative, evidence based policies can help build us the housing and infrastructure we need. Embracing the use of tiny homes, shipping containers as component parts, and communal housing will help the Municipality carve out a competitive advantage based on best practices. Municipalities that signal to the private sector they have policies and by-laws based on best practices will be able to better compete for investment dollars.

The County of Peterborough is currently undergoing a renewal of its Official Plan (OP), to which the Township is a party to. This is a once in 10-year opportunity for the Township to ensure the new OP reflects the Township's priorities. This also presents an opportunity to reorganize the existing hamlet areas to lay the foundation for new growth. The Township has too many unproductive properties within the hamlet designations where new growth can't occur.

Revitalizing existing "downtown" areas in rural Municipalities helps attract new businesses and people to the area. The public realm and street scape in Apsley has largely looked the same for many years. Priority has been given to parking within the hamlet, to the detriment of pedestrians, businesses, and green space. Multiple grant opportunities have presented themselves that are geared towards rural Municipalities who are looking to revitalize their downtown cores.

The Township owns a number of properties throughout the Municipality that are used to provide services to ratepayers (Community Centers, Municipal Office, Roads Department etc). In addition to the aforementioned properties, the Township also owns several undeveloped and vacant parcels of land. Part of this Strategic Economic Development Plan includes a review of the Municipality's surplus property list. Recommendations for the surplus property list will be brought forward at a later date.

1.0 – Residential Development (Timeline – Short Term)

- o 1.1- Explore reorganizing our existing Hamlet areas through the County Official Plan renewal to lay the foundation for new residential growth. This should be a collaborative, community based process working with landowners in the Township
- o 1.2 - Prioritize the right mix of housing to meet our current and future needs. This should include a review of a range of housing including purpose built rentals, town-homes, multi-unit, single family homes, housing for seniors and those with accessibility needs
- o 1.3 - Complete a review to explore the possibility of phasing out “Seasonal Residential” Zoning and replace it with “Residential” Zoning for all properties on a Municipally or County maintained roadway

2.0 – Residential Intensification (Timeline – Short Term)

- o 2.1 - Develop a targeted communications plan to educate ratepayers on the Township’s secondary unit by-law to increase uptake
- o 2.2 - Create density targets for existing hamlet areas and any new development

3.0 – Employment Lands (Timeline – Short Term)

- o 3.1 - Complete a review of employment lands in the Township to determine additional employment lands that need to be added through the Official Plan renewal. This should focus on the long term employment lands needs for the Municipality

4.0 – “M” - Mixed Use Zoning (Timeline – Short Term)

- o 4.1 - As best practice planning, introduce “M” mixed used zoning to our comprehensive zoning by-laws. This would combine residential and specific commercial uses for the same property

5.0 – Master Plan (Timeline – Short Term)

- o 5.1 - Consider creating a master plan for the hamlet of Apsley. A component of the master plan should also include a downtown revitalization plan that focuses on improvement to the streetscape, and public realm.

6.0 – Innovation in Housing (Timeline – Short Term)

- o 6.1 - Enact policies that promote new, innovate solutions in housing including
 - Align the minimum habitable dwelling size with the Ontario Building Code (OBC) to allow for Tiny Homes
 - Amend our by-laws to allow for shipping container to be used as component parts in the construction of new dwellings
 - Amend our by-laws to allow for communal housing to better address the housing needs of seniors and those with accessibility requirements

7.0 – Municipal Surplus Property List (Timeline – Short Term)

- o 7.1 - Complete a review of the Municipal surplus property list and present recommendations to Council for consideration

Infrastructure

Investments in infrastructure, particularly in Internet, cell coverage, and transportation will be critical to addressing the infrastructure gap in North Kawartha. For years, ratepayers and businesses have been left with sub-standard or non-existent cellular and Internet service. Whether for school, work, or our own leisure, access to high speed broadband is a requirement for participation in the 21st century economy. COVID19 has reinforced the need for immediate improvements in cell and internet service. Recent program announcements by the provincial government have provided new funding to support cellular and high speed broadband in rural Municipalities.

The Township has no form of private (Greyhound) or public (GO Transit & VIA) transportation. Access to transportation is key to the success of any economy. Rural municipalities that want transit need to focus on innovative, out of the box solutions. Solutions need to address the core reasons why traditional fixed route transit models don't work in rural municipalities. The operating costs (subsidy per ride & cost recovery ratio) are too high, service doesn't align with demand, and it provides a dismal customer experience. The town of Innisfil delivers its entire public transit solution in partnership with Uber. These are the kind of innovative partnerships we need to focus on as a Municipality. These solutions are designed around the customer experience, while at the same time drive down long term operating costs. This model also offers economic and employment opportunities for local residents.

Since 2008, successive Federal governments have been promising the return of passenger rail to Peterborough. VIA's High Frequency Rail Proposal (HFR) brings the Region a step closer to that becoming a reality. Havelock Belmont Methuen (HBM) and NK house CP Rail's blue Mountain subdivision. The rail line connects the Nepton mines, back to CP's mainline with access to Toronto and the rest of CP's North American Rail Network. Planning is well underway for VIA rails HFR network. VIA has indicated they will work with Municipalities that are interested in hosting a stop. Asking for a limited service (Fri-Sun), seasonal stop (May-Oct) on an existing rail line a reasonable ask VIA can build a business case around. However, the time to ask is now while system planning and negotiations with CP rail are underway.

1.0 – Communal Servicing (Timeline – Short to Long Term)

- 1.1 - Complete a case study that provides the framework that would allow communal water and waste water systems to be used for new residential and commercial development. This should include a review of whether establishing a Municipal Service Corporation is feasible for North Kawartha

2.0 – VIA HFR Proposal (Timeline – Short to Long Term)

- 2.1 - Advocate to all levels of government for VIA's HFR proposal to bring stops to the County & City of Peterborough. This would create direct, daily rail connections to Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal
- 2.2 - Explore with VIA Rail the possibility of adding a limited service, seasonal stop at the East Side of Stoney Lake on the existing CP Blue Mountain Subdivision

3.0 – Internet & Cell Service (Timeline – Short to Medium Term)

- o 3.1 – Work with EORN & Rogers on the implementation of the recently announced cell gap partnership to bring cell service to all of North Kawartha
- o 3.2 – Actively work with Infrastructure Ontario and the private sector on delivering the “Ontario Connects” program to that aims to bring high speed Internet to all households in the Province by the end of 2025.

4.0 – Transit (Timeline – Short to Long Term)

- o 4.1 – Complete a needs assessment to determine the viability of ride sharing as a form of public transit, and determine available sources of funding. This process should include a public consultation
- o 4.2 – Explore partnership opportunities with Metrolinx, and our neighboring municipalities that would bring seasonal GO Bus Service to North Kawartha for summer 2022 or 2023

5.0 – Off Road Vehicles (ORV) on County Roads (Timeline- Short Term)

- o 5.1 – Advocate to the County and work with our rate payers to allow access to ORV on County Roads within the Township

Labour

Access to labor continues to be a critical issue for businesses in the Township. In addition to the labor issues previously noted, access to skilled trades and professional services continue to be a challenge for businesses and ratepayers. Construction companies have difficulty finding and retaining tradespeople to work for them. Residents and businesses needing contractors for larger projects could be waiting 2+ years before contractors can start. A lack of professional services including engineers, architects, psychologists, and medical professionals means money & jobs leave the Township to neighboring municipalities like Lakefield, Bancroft, and Peterborough. With an aging population, it's becoming increasingly paramount that businesses secure skilled workers that are able to live locally. The municipality also needs to be prepared for many small owner / operator businesses to close up shop, unless they find supports to transition out of their business and into retirement. Labor challenges and limited commercial space also restrict businesses ability to grow within the Township.

For smaller Municipalities like North Kawartha, partnerships with our regional stakeholders are key. One of the advantages of the Region is access to a University, and College within commuting distance of the Township. If the Municipality were to form partnerships with these institutions, it can help provide new apprentices, and specialized labor for local businesses and community groups. If the Township were to take the lead in establishing a partnership, it could alleviate the administrative, and regulatory burden for small businesses who don't have the expertise or resources to navigate these institutions. Trent's focus on the sciences: particularly biology, chemistry, and environmental science provides a wealth of opportunities to help protect our natural environment. We already have (1) lake association working with Trent University on fighting invasive aquatic species. Fleming College's skilled trades program has upper year students looking to complete apprenticeship in the skilled trades.

Economic migration continues to be the backbone of Canada's immigration system. Canada's immigration system focuses on bringing highly skilled immigrants to Canada to help fill gaps in the labor market. Typically, new immigrants move to larger urban centers where more economic, social, and cultural opportunities lie. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) is running a rural and northern immigration pilot project in 11 regions across the Country. Programs like this have the potential to help fill gaps in our local labor market should the pilot be deemed successful. Working with our neighboring municipalities and economic development agencies, the Township needs to keep a close watch on this program to determine if it could be a good fit for the Municipality.

1.0 – Partnership with Fleming College (Timeline – Short Term)

- o 1.1 - Explore partnership opportunities with Fleming College to support local businesses with apprenticeship placements to help fill gaps in the labor market. The Township can take a leadership role in establishing a partnership with Fleming in order to reduce the regulatory and administrative burden for the Townships small businesses.

2.0 – Partnership with Trent University (Timeline – Medium Term)

- 2.1 - Review partnership opportunities with Trent University and their community research based program. Partnership opportunities can focus on student placement (coop) with Township businesses, as well as research projects geared towards environmental stewardship and protection

3.0 – Supporting Entrepreneurship (Timeline – Short Term)

- 3.1 - Continue to partner with Peterborough and the Kawartha's Economic Development (PKED) to promote, and encourage the use of their innovative programs and expertise to foster newly formed, and startup businesses in the Township

4.0 – Home Based Businesses (Timeline – Short Term)

- 3.1 - Explore changes to the Township's Comprehensive Zoning By-Laws to expand eligibility for more home based business

5.0 – Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot (Timeline – Long Term)

- 5.1 - Monitor results of the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot being run by IRCC with our partners to determine if the program would be a good fit for North Kawartha should it continue. The Rural and Northern Immigration pilot has the potential to help fill gaps in the local labor market.

Tourism

Tourism, and the summer cottage season has long been the backbone of the Township's economy. North Kawartha's population can increase from 2,500 in the off season to 15K during peak season. With that brings people, demand and money to be spent at local businesses. The flip side of that is we've become dependent on the short summer season for the survival of the Township. The Township needs to focus on tourism and events that bring to the people in during "shoulder season," outside of the core summer months. The Township has excellent events, specifically around arts & culture that the Municipality could partner with to help bring people to the Region.

Short Terms Rentals (STR's) have always been in North Kawartha, and always will be in North Kawartha. In recent years, how residents rent their cottages has changed. Technology and the sharing economy has filled a gap in the short term accommodation market; giving homeowners flexibility, choice, and convenience when it comes to renting their property. Consumer behavior, and expectations are also changing. Private house rentals continue to grow in popularity, while demand for traditional lodged facilities declines. The rise in STR's also means an increase in tourism revenue for businesses in the Township. However, the increase in popularity does bring some specific challenges that Municipalities need to address. STR's have an unfair advantage over traditional lodging facilities, and it's important that all rentals operate on a level playing field. STR's that operate as commercial enterprises without the proper requirements need a regulatory framework to oversee them.

Municipalities with strong brands are destinations where people want to live, work, play, and invest. Prince Edward County, Muskoka, and Niagara on the Lake are great local examples of rural, tourism dependent regions that have built a strong brand identity. There is a void in Peterborough-Kawartha region for a Municipality to take the lead brand. The Township has the opportunity to take the lead in crafting a strong brand identity for itself. Branding isn't about a new logo or color palette; it's about presenting a clear understanding of who we are, what we stand for, and what our values are as a community. We want to articulate a strong value proposition, and a vision for ourselves. North Kawartha will be "The Place to be" in Peterborough and the Kawarthas.

1.0 – Township Branding (Timeline – Short Term)

- 1.1 – Draft an RFP to find a qualified vendor who can provide the full suite branding & communication services to the Township before the end of 2021 to utilize the Municipal Modernization Grant provided to the Township.

2.0 – A by-law to regulate Short Term Rentals (STR) (Timeline – Short to Medium Term)

- 2.1 – Draft a By-law to regulate Short Term Rentals that operate in the Township. This should include a review of what would be considered commercial, and non-commercial activity, and include extensive public consultations.

3.0 – Visitor Accommodation Tax (VAT) (Timeline – Medium Term)

- 3.1 - Develop a plan to consider implementing the 4% VAT only on STR's in the Township. This generates additional non-tax revenue for the Township, and helps even the playing field with traditional roofed accommodations complete who struggle to compete with STR's.

4.0 – Integrated Marketing & Communications Plan (Timeline – Medium Term)

- 4.1 - Create a yearly integrated marketing and communications plan to promote our region as a four season destination to live, work, play, and invest. This should also include an allocation in the Township's annual budget for marketing and communications costs.

5.0 – Signature Yearly Event (Timeline – Medium Term)

- 5.1 - Work with our local events, festivals, and businesses to create a yearly, signature event for the Township. Focus can be celebrating our arts & cultural heritage to help grow tourism during the shoulder season.

Economic Diversification

Creating an economy that works year round, and not just during the summer months is critical to the long term success of the Municipality. Complete communities that have a diversified economic base are best situated for long term prosperity.

Municipalities are competing for private investment in housing, business, and infrastructure. Courting big ticket investment takes years. Want a developer to build housing in your Municipality? Looking to attract certain types of businesses to set up shop? Want infrastructure built in your community? Then we need a plan to get it done. Investment strategies help provide a clear plan for Municipalities to attract and retain private investment.

Attracting and retaining a highly skilled workforce is critical to the success of any Region. As the way we work changes, it's important that Municipalities adapt their practices to meet the needs of workers and businesses. Remote work, or working from home has been a way of life for many since the pandemic began. For those working remotely in rural municipalities, access to high speed broadband continues to be a major stumbling block. Shared workspaces are common in major cities, as companies, especially small & medium size enterprises look to reduce their real estate footprint to help their bottom line. Providing a space in the Municipality for workers and businesses that has high speed Internet, meeting room facilities, desk space, and technology is crucial. One of the biggest untapped assets we have is the human capital in our seasonal residents. We have highly skilled seasonal residents who want to be able work from the cottage but can't. We have lots of local home based businesses that need space to meet clients, but don't have the means or need to rent out a space on monthly basis. Shared workspaces also act as incubators for new entrepreneurs who can get mentorship and guidance for business owners in the community.

1.0 – Investment Strategy (Timeline – Short Term)

- 1.1 – Prepare an investment strategy for the Township with a focus on securing new private investment to bring in residential and commercial development for the Township

2.0 – Community Engagement – Seasonal Residents (Timeline – Medium Term)

- 2.1 – Draft a community engagement plan to better connect with our seasonal residents that own their own business, operate in professional services or the trades to encourage them to practice in North Kawartha. Special focus should be given to those reaching semi-retirement or retirement.

3.0 – Business Hub (Timeline – Medium Term)

- 3.1 – Establish a shared work space / business hub in the Township that addresses barriers faced by local businesses, and residents working from home (i.e. lack of high speed broadband, lack of meeting facilities & space, high cost of rent and limited commercial space)

Foundational Piece

This portion of the plan focuses on the building blocks that bring the rest of the plan to fruition. Municipalities that operate in true partnership with the private sector are the ones that get investment. Time delays for projects cost the private sector money and jobs. Antiquated zoning by-laws and Official Plans stifle new, orderly growth. Streamlining approvals, and removing red tape are critical to getting things done efficiently. The private sector needs certainty, and a clear understanding of the rules and expectations.

Reputation matters. It takes years to build, and minutes to lose. Municipalities that are fair, reasonable, and responsive in their dealings with the private sector will get investment over those that aren't. Positioning the Township as a true partner with the private sector will be key to the Municipalities long term success.

1.0 – Service Delivery Review

- 1.1 – Complete a service delivery review of the services provided by the lower and upper tier municipality to find efficiencies, cost savings, and improve outcomes for rate payers

2.0 – Review of Comprehensive Zoning By-Laws

- 2.1 – Modernize, and updated our Comprehensive Zoning By-laws. This can be done in conjunction with the updates that will be required through the new Official Plan.

3.0 – Red Tape Reduction & Streamline Approval Process

- 3.1 – Explore the possibility of entering into a service level agreement with the Crowe Valley Conservation Authority and other agencies to streamline, and speed up the development approval process

4.0 – Positioning the Township as a Trusted Business Partner

- 4.1 – Strong focus on building and maintaining our corporate reputation as a trusted business partner with the private sector.