

***The Change Agenda***  
***New and Emerging Issues***

**Meeting the Community's Needs**

**2015-18**  
**Strategic Plan**

A Submission By  
Paul Pagnuelo  
To  
The Committee of the Whole  
Town of Cobourg

January 26, 2015

# INDEX

	<b>Page(s)</b>
The Author	1
Introduction	2
Vision Statement	2
Mission Statement	3
Strategic Planning Session	3
Strategic Priorities, Milestones and Responsibilities	3
Strategic Actions	
• Communications	3-4
• Governance	4
• Direct Democracy	4
• Finance	5
• Tourism	5-6
• Economic Development	6
• Operations and Service Delivery	6
• Safety and Security	6
• Parking	6-7
• Downtown Vitalization	7-8
• Waterfront	8-9

## **The Author**

My wife and I moved to Cobourg in the summer of 2009 and we are pleased and honoured to call Cobourg home.

I retired in 2008 following a distinguished 43 year career with Bank of Montreal.

My early years with BMO involved numerous branch positions and postings. I subsequently transferred into very diverse disciplines including divisional and credit administration, loan portfolio analysis, legislation and government, risk management policy and the Canadian payments system. From 1994 until my retirement, I was Senior Manager and Policy Advisor responsible for providing counsel to senior executives and through the Canadian Bankers Association and the Canadian Payments Association, negotiating strategic policy initiatives with financial institutions and government.

Following my retirement, I acted as a consultant and expert witness to one of Canada's leading business law firms, conducted detailed research and analysis and provided expert opinion, advice and recommendations on wire transfers and anti-money laundering practices and legislation involving a major international case.

After moving to Cobourg, I served for four year as a Director and Treasurer for a small Condominium Corporation in town.

From March 2009 until November 2012, I served as a Director and Treasurer for a large Homeowners Association in Florida and on the Board of Managers for its real estate brokerage subsidiary.

In the 1990s, I served in a voluntary capacity as the Ontario spokesperson for the Canadian Taxpayers Federation (CTF), Canada's largest non-partisan taxpayer advocacy group and until recently was a member of the CTF's board of directors.

In 1989 I was President of the Toronto-Peterborough-Havelock Passenger Association, we responded responsibly to the federal government's cancellation of VIA Rail service. We commissioned a feasibility study on establishing a private sector commuter rail network. The project was derailed when the Ontario government announced, the day before the positive results of our study were released, that it was extending GO service to four of the five proposed lines.

I received CTF's *Taxfighter of the Year Award* and am the proud recipient of the Queen's Jubilee Medal.

I ran unsuccessfully as a candidate for Cobourg's Deputy Mayor in the 2014 municipal election and am committed to do what I can as a citizen in rebuilding Cobourg's economic prosperity so it can be restored to the great community that it can be.

My wife Marilyn and I have been married for thirty-eight years and have two children. Daughter Stephanie lives in London and son Matthew in Calgary.

## **Introduction**

The purpose of the 2015-18 Strategic Plan is to provide Council with a roadmap of where the Town of Cobourg should be headed over the next four years, complete with goals, priorities, and strategic actions of how to get there and metrics and milestones to monitor and measure progress.

As a starting point, Council should review the 2011-14 Strategic Plan to determine if each of the strategic actions have been completed and whether the desired outcomes have been achieved.

## **Vision**

### **Current**

Cobourg will be a healthy lakeside community, honouring our past and confident in our future.

### **What It Should Be**

The current Vision Statement is boilerplate, unimaginative, and bland. It needs to be refreshed. It must be realistic, exciting, motivational and inspire strategic direction, which the current Statement is not. By looking toward the long-term effect on the community, it must reflect the needs and desires of citizens and contain the primary objectives of where the municipality sees itself at the end of 2018.

### **Proposed**

Cobourg is celebrated for its cultural heritage and natural beauty.

It is a lakeside community that offers small-town charm, a first-class beach, walking trails and accessible green spaces.

It has a vibrant and sustainable downtown core that is pedestrian friendly, offering unique and one-of-a kind shopping and entertainment.

Its thriving economic base is diversified with a focus on tourism, knowledge-based start-ups, robotics, health sciences and agri-food processing.

The housing stock is priced to appeal to all demographics, offering a mix of old and new, and the local trades workforce is flourishing with controlled development growth.

Residential and business taxes are affordable and competitive; operating and capital expenditures have been tightly controlled and reduced.

Cobourg's Council provides direction to the Mayor on all matters coming before County Council and citizens are fully engaged in Council's decision making process.

There is a clear separation of the administrative and executive branches of our local government and governance is modeled on a culture of accountability and full and open disclosure.

## **Mission**

### **Current**

The Corporation of the Town of Cobourg will be committed to responsible governance and to the provision of effective, accessible services consistent with best practices.

### **Proposed**

The Mission of the Town of Cobourg is to provide a safe, healthy, sustainable community and a great place in which to work, live, play and invest. A community that offers its residents and businesses growth and opportunity.

The Town through Council and staff will represent and provide its citizens with high quality essential public services that affect their well being and reflect their interests and will maintain the financial integrity of the municipality. Services provided include but are not limited to fire and police protection, road maintenance, water and sewer, electricity, planning and development, parks and recreation, library, transit, and By-law enforcement.

Led by Council, the Town of Cobourg will spend public money wisely and will govern in an open, accessible and accountable manner.

## **Strategic Planning Session**

The Strategic Planning Session should not be viewed as a “Training” session for Council that is held in closed session. It should be open to the public.

## **Strategic Priorities, Milestones and Responsibilities**

In order to be effective, the Strategic Plan should:

- Prioritize strategic actions.
- Include milestones.
- Identify who is responsible for implementation of each strategic action. This might be done through an Implementation Committee or tasks could be delegated to staff or to current or existing advisory or standing committees.

Progress of the Strategic Plan should be reviewed at each Council meeting and Council should hold a detailed six-month review to evaluate progress and to make adjustments where necessary.

## **Strategic Actions**

### **1. Communications**

<b>Strategic Action</b>	<b>Rationale/Purpose</b>
Establish a Citizen Advisory Committee on Strategic Planning	Engage the community in identifying citizens' priorities and provides an “arms-length”, unbiased mechanism for rating staff and Council's progress in achieving the priorities.

<b>Strategic Action</b>	<b>Rationale/Purpose</b>
Establish an on-line citizen “Virtual Town Hall” accessible to both the public and members of Council	Provides a forum for gathering representative citizen information through an interactive approach to public involvement.
Stream all Council and Committee meetings live and post on YouTube or other social media.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides an opportunity for citizens to see all Council and committee meetings.</li> <li>• Expands viewing audience of Council meetings to residents other than Cogeco subscribers.</li> </ul>

## **2. Governance**

<b>Strategic Action</b>	<b>Rationale/Purpose</b>
Separation of powers – Eliminate Councillors role of “co-coordinators” for municipal departments and replace with a Standing Committee structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current structure places individual Councillors in a conflict of interest position in which they cannot be objective but instead results in their doing staff’s bidding.</li> <li>• Senior staff should be responsible for providing departmental reports to Council.</li> </ul>
Full disclosure of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expense accounts (with receipts) of senior staff and Council members to be posted online.</li> <li>• All financial contracts and agreements and any business relationships members of council and staff, and family members, might have with providers of services to the Town, including donors to political campaigns.</li> </ul>	Provides a strong commitment to ethics and open government.
Cobourg Council will provide direction to the Mayor on all matters coming before County Council and citizens should be given the opportunity to be fully engaged in Council’s decision making process on County matters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• County taxes account for 30.9% of the residential tax bill in the Town of Cobourg.</li> <li>• While the Mayor is the Town’s representative on County Council, this should not be construed as authority for the Mayor to act alone in deciding on matters at the County level.</li> </ul>
Use the Ontario Ombudsman as the investigator for complaints about closed meetings instead of Council appointing their own.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shows strong commitment to Bill 8 under which the Ombudsman may now investigate all municipal complaints.</li> <li>• Service is free of charge.</li> <li>• Brings truly independent scrutiny to Council’s closed session meetings.</li> </ul>

## **3. Direct Democracy**

<b>Strategic Action</b>	<b>Rationale/Purpose</b>
Provide citizens with more say in the workings of our community through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequent “Town Hall” meetings.</li> <li>• The use of referendums on critically important issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring that citizens have more direct say in the workings of our community is a hallmark of democracy.</li> <li>• Democracy should be practiced openly, all the time.</li> <li>• Provides a way to gauge public opinion on an ongoing basis.</li> <li>• On critically important issues, citizens must be part of the decision making process.</li> <li>• Referendums deliver the people’s voice.</li> </ul>

#### 4. Finance

Strategic Action	Rationale/Purpose
Reduce taxes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lowering taxes is an imperative.</li> <li>• The current level of taxation is not sustainable and is a major disincentive to the retention of existing businesses and the attraction of new businesses.</li> <li>• The level of taxation must take into account local age, employment and income demographics.</li> <li>• Spending and taxation must be adjusted downwards as commercial and industrial vacancies occur. It is simply unfair and unrealistic to offload the cost to residential taxpayers and the remaining commercial and industrial tax base.</li> <li>• Tax reduction can be accomplished through reduced spending, lower vacancy rates in commercial and industrial property, new assessment growth, realignment of “measureable” services to a user-pay basis, closing the cost gap on certain services (e.g. transit and the CCC) through revenue from naming rights, advertising, and repricing of user fees</li> </ul>
Reduce Spending	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lower the costs of Town services through efficiencies, the control of discretionary spending, staff re-organization, competitive bidding and Public-Private Partnerships.</li> </ul>
Demonstrate value for tax dollars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement performance measurement standards over and above those required in provincial reporting.</li> <li>• Include “Value for Money” assessments as part of the annual external audit.</li> </ul>
Establish an Advisory Committee on Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While there a number of Advisory Committees, a Finance Advisory Committee does not exist.</li> <li>• An Advisory Committee on Finance should be an integral part of the annual Budget process. It’s mandate should include a comprehensive review of all spending and taxation, expenditure control, new ways to effectively manage costs and ongoing oversight of all municipal and county spending.</li> </ul>

#### 5. Tourism

Strategic Action	Rationale/Purpose
Drive tourism to shop, dine and be entertained in the downtown core.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drive tourism into the downtown, not around it.</li> <li>• Turn the tannery lands into a transportation hub where out-of-town beach goers would be required to park and pay a daily fee, not unlike provincial parks. Residents would have sticker-free parking.</li> </ul>

Strategic Action	Rationale/Purpose
Drive tourism to shop, dine and be entertained in the downtown core (Cont'd.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As part of the Town's transit service, offer a unique "trolley" service from the tannery transportation hub. It would route people from the tannery through multiple stops downtown to the beach and then back again, following a reverse direction. We need to create a continuous, "fun-trip" loop between the beach, waterfront and downtown.</li> </ul>

## 6. Economic Development

Strategic Action	Rationale/Purpose
Focus on year-round tourism, knowledge-based start-ups, robotics, health sciences, agri-food processing, local trades, entertainment and hospitality services.	<p>We need to attract the jobs of the new economy that will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversify our economic base.</li> <li>• Provide opportunity for our youth.</li> <li>• Utilize our existing commercial and industrial vacancies.</li> <li>• Provide meaningful employment.</li> <li>• Provide a sustainable economic tax base.</li> </ul>

## 7. Operations and Service Delivery

Strategic Action	Rationale/Purpose
Make public the operational review study, seek public input and implement recommendations.	Review and implementation of the completed study should be a top priority of the new Council.

## 8. Safety and Security

Strategic Action	Rationale/Purpose
Inspect derelict and vacant commercial and industrial properties for fire and safety code violations.	Would ensure that public safety and the safety of adjoining properties is not jeopardized by absentee or disinterested owners of commercial and industrial properties.

## 9. Parking

Strategic Action	Rationale/Purpose
Revisit the issue of paid parking on a Town wide basis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The recent introduction of paid parking in the downtown core has not been well received by many who cite it as an irritant and disincentive to shopping and dining on King Street.</li> <li>• Based on the 2013 Financial Information Return filed with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, parking resulted in a net loss to the Town of \$127,382. User fees and service charges brought in a total of \$153,737.</li> </ul>



Strategic Action	Rationale/Purpose
Revisit the issue of paid parking on a Town wide basis (Cont'd.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expenses totalled \$281,119 and were comprised of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Salaries and Benefits \$50,601</li> <li>- Materials \$130,418</li> <li>- Contracted Services \$83,597</li> <li>- Allocation of Program Support \$16,773</li> </ul> </li> <li>• While there is a cost to maintaining public parking lots, it's a necessary cost if we want to maintain a viable and sustainable downtown business core.</li> <li>• Paid parking in the downtown area is a no win situation. It simply chases off potential clients to other locations in Town (Northumberland Mall, Smart Centres, strip malls, Walmart, etc.) where parking is free.</li> <li>• It will add to further decay in the downtown core, more closed or struggling businesses and is counter-productive to any revitalization effort.</li> <li>• If the issue is out-of-towners who use our beach in the summer and don't spend a dime shopping or dining while here, the solution isn't a parking fee.</li> <li>• The Town doesn't charge for parking on our side streets, local parks, the CCC or the Library.</li> <li>• There needs to be a comprehensive review of the Town's overall parking policy with a clear objective of what it is intended to achieve and a cost/benefit analysis of paid vs. free parking.</li> </ul>

**10. Downtown Vitalization**

Strategic Action	Rationale/Purpose
Overcome the planning sclerosis and get things moving quickly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Plan's completion deadlines extend as far out as Fall 2016 and no renovations to buildings can be undertaken until the Heritage Master Plan is completed and approved (completion deadline Spring 2016).</li> <li>• The length of time to complete the Heritage Master Plan is a further roadblock. It must be taken out of the hands of consultants and staff. The Heritage Advisory Committee and other volunteers should lead the way and deal with its completion on a high priority basis.</li> </ul>
Disband the Venture Capital Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Venture Capital Initiative is based on the premise that building owners cannot obtain financing from traditional lenders to renovate their premises.</li> <li>• This is not the case, as many large building owners are likely flush with cash or have access to traditional lending.</li> </ul>

Strategic Action	Rationale/Purpose
Disband the Venture Capital Initiative (Cont'd.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The issue is that they will not make the necessary investments unless they see the potential for a return on investment. A good ROI can be demonstrated and it can start by making sure the Town does not stand in their way with endless red tape and delays. We need business cooperation, not bureaucratic roadblocks.</li> <li>• The Venture Capital Initiative will fail if it is left in the hands, or even at arms length, of the municipality. Cobourg's taxpayers should never be exposed to the high risks of venture capital financing of this type and magnitude. Venture Capital financing should be a private sector initiative.</li> </ul>
Establish a clear vision of Cobourg's downtown.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What vision does Downtown Vitalization have in terms of a model community elsewhere?</li> <li>• There does not seem to be a clear vision at this time and yet there are many communities who have defined a vision and been successful.</li> <li>• Port Perry and Niagara-on-the-Lake are two examples that we can emulate.</li> </ul>
Encourage the DBIA to seek consensus on consistency in store hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Downtown businesses in the retail and entertainment field must offer consumers consistency in store hours.</li> <li>• Merchants need to move beyond the traditional Monday to Saturday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and closed Sunday business model if they are to compete with the big-box stores and mall shopping habits of people.</li> <li>• This is particularly crucial during the spring and summer months when we need to cater to the preferences of both tourists and residents.</li> <li>• This is an important marketing issue that the merchants need to reach agreement on.</li> <li>• While it is not something the Town can or should dictate, it should encourage the DBIA to seek consensus.</li> </ul>

## 11. Waterfront

Strategic Action	Rationale/Purpose
Preserve the West Harbour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The people have spoken and it is clear that a strong majority of those who have voiced their opinion are opposed to expanding the marina into the west harbor.</li> <li>• Following further public discussion, if the public consensus continues to clearly oppose expansion, Council should approve a motion to preserve the West Harbour.</li> <li>• If there is no clear public consensus or a "split vote" on Council, a final decision should be held in abeyance until citizens are given a final say by means of a referendum held at the time of the next general municipal election.</li> </ul>

Refurbish the East Pier	<p><i>Full attribution for this initiative, as it appears below, belongs to Grahame Woods who included it in his September 15, 2014 column in NT.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It should be repaved and transformed into an attractive southern gateway to our town.</li><li>• Along the centre of the pier I would encourage stone planters and seating, with attractive, old-fashioned lamp standards as well as appealing garbage containers - a promenade designed for people, the lighting a beacon for out-of-town boating visitors.</li><li>• As well, I would ban cars from the pier on weekends and holiday weekends, creating a true 'people-place'.</li></ul>
-------------------------	---