

## Mayor's Year-End Report 2023

Delivered by Mayor King on December 14, 2023.

Council, I am pleased to present the annual year-end report outlining the municipality's work and key accomplishments since January 1, 2023. The annual report was introduced five years ago and is an important tool to measure our progress against the fiscal year's goals and objectives. I will begin with the capital works projects and conclude with the Departments' operational plans.

Before I begin, however, I want to take a few moments to remember our dear friend and colleague, Councillor Barry Saunders, whom we suddenly lost nearly five months ago. We have all felt his absence and miss his laughter, wisdom, guidance, and friendship. Barry was an integral part of our team and brought an important perspective to our work as a Council. As I present the annual report, I'm sure we will all remember Barry's voice and contributions. He championed several projects this year, including the Faulkner Recreation Complex walking trail and Country Road asphalt repairs, and we appreciated his lobbying and persistence. Let us remember Barry in the fondness he deserves as a friend, Councillor, and community-minded individual.

With that said, I'll now present the annual report.

### Capital Works Projects

2023 marked the conclusion of the Greenridge Road waterline upgrade project! As Council is aware, residents living in this area frequently experienced water quality issues unless the bleed line was open, and even then, there could be issues. The bleed line was causing problems for the west end playground lift station, particularly the pumps; therefore, this project was critical to improving water quality and reducing the strain on our wastewater infrastructure. Since 2016, over \$600,000 has been invested in the Greenridge Road water system infrastructure, with the recent upgrade costing \$488,756. The breakdown is as follows.

	Total (with HST)
Greenridge Road Fire Hydrant	35,000
Greenridge Road Waterline Loop	112,211
Greenridge Road Waterline Upgrade	488,756
	635,967

I know I speak for Council when I say we are pleased to see this project concluded.

In addition to Greenridge Road, we also concluded or initiated the following projects:

- (1) Stadium dressing room extension. We expected to see construction begin this year, but the project encountered delays at the engineering stage. The prime consultants are presently seeking approval to tender from the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, and we anticipate this project will begin over the coming months when weather permits.
- (2) Dominic Street road upgrades: Council invested \$22,765 of its gas tax funding to repair 526 square meters of Dominic Street.
- (3) Faulkner Recreation Complex walking trail development: With funding from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, we upgraded the track around the soccer field and developed a walking trail. This project cost \$22,770.
- (4) Newtown Road waterline upgrade. Earlier this year, we learned our application to upgrade a section of waterline on Newtown Road was approved! The project's budget is \$271,051 (HST included), with the Town contributing \$49,160. We engaged the prime consultant this year, and engineering work is underway.

Now, I'll discuss the operational plans.

### **Public Works**

The Public Works Department was tasked with 12 initiatives in its 2023 Operational Plan. I am pleased to report that it completed the following:

- Initiated conversations with other parties regarding land for residential development. These discussions are preliminary.
- Reconstructed 1,220 meters of ditches throughout town via a contract.
- Implemented the 2023 curbside residential Spring clean-up program. The Department collected 131 tonnes of debris and waste.
- Repaired, through a contract, 1,320 square meters of asphalt, including sections on Country Road, Newtown Road, Main Street, and Lower Avenue. Council invested roughly \$66,000 in regular asphalt repair this year. The Department directly distributed around 61 tonnes of asphalt to fix potholes.
- Repaired six waterline breaks as of December 13, 2023 (compared to 13 in the previous year).
- Addressed water quality issues throughout town. As of December 13, 2023, the Town received 10 formal water quality complaints that the Department attributes primarily to unusual system issues (i.e., high chlorine levels); however, two flushing devices were installed (Tucker Park and Tower Road) to improve water quality in specific areas.

- Installed a mechanism on the Hampton's Hill water tower that will improve the accuracy of tank readings (i.e., pressure and water level).
- Sealed cracks that developed in our road network.
- Elevated the service level on Sunset Drive. Approximately ten loads of material were distributed in the first quarter, and the brush is being cut this quarter, among other road maintenance activities (i.e., grading).
- Reconstructed Epstein Place using asphalt millings.
- Replaced one culvert on Thirteen Mile Crossing.
- As of December 13, 2023, the Department responded to and addressed over 70 formal work orders/residential issues through our workflow/task management system.

This list is not exhaustive, and the Department completed other work and delivered important services such as snow clearing, line painting, chlorine sampling, etc.

### **Recreation**

The Recreation Department was tasked with 13 initiatives in its 2023 Operational Plan. I am pleased to report that it completed the following:

- Operated the Pat O'Reilly Memorial Stadium. Outside lighting was fixed this year, and the lower protective sheeting was installed on the stands (north side).
- The Beautification Committee was formed this year but did not have an initiation meeting. Two residents stepped forward and were appointed, and the Committee will begin its work, as outlined in its Terms of Reference, this coming year.
- Acquired and installed the seasonal flags in Main Street Linear Park.
- The Town hired six summer students this year without any support under the Canada Summer Jobs program. These students worked as Clean-up Workers and Day Camp Facilitators.
- The summer recreation program was redesigned and included the Children's Day Camp and the Youth Recreation Program. 110 participants registered (45 for day camp, 14 for softball, 22 for soccer, 23 for volleyball, and 6 for kayaking), an increase of 75% over 2022.
- With funding under the New Horizons for Seniors Program, we hosted a 12-week wellness program and six Christmas Craft workshops. In all cases, demand exceeded capacity – approximately 120 seniors registered for the Christmas workshops alone!
- The River Shiver, a new winter recreation event, was launched in March, combining food, comedy, and live entertainment. The event sold out and was a great success.

- We celebrated Canada Day on July 1, 2023, at the west-end playground with our usual activities. The seniors/war veteran banquet was also held that day.
- We assisted the RiverFest Committee with our annual summer festival.
- With funding from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and in partnership with Rafting NL, we initiated Exploits River adult kayaking classes. The response was great, with 34 people entering the draw for ten placements.
- Harvest on the Exploits occurred on September 23, 2023. We estimate over 1,000 people visited the stadium throughout the day, and we believe this was the most successful year yet.
- The Zombie Walk and Haunting on the Boardwalk, which was elevated this year, was attended by over 840 people. The haunted houses were a great addition.
- Christmas on the Boardwalk began on December 4, 2023, and hundreds of people attended the opening night, which included an outdoor Christmas market for the first time. The lights will remain on until January 6, 2024. Marathon Gold donated \$10,000 for this event, and we very much appreciate the support.

Again, the above list does not represent all the Department's responsibilities or accomplishments, but it provides a good summary relative to the operational plan for 2023.

### **Other**

In addition to the activities carried out by the Public Works and Recreation Departments, the Town also;

- established and supported the Special Committee on Healthcare, which was mandated to restore primary health care services in Bishop's Falls. I'm very pleased to state that our activities will result in Bishop's Falls having its own Nurse Practitioner and satellite clinic, which we anticipate will open in January 2024.
- procured a new 2023 Freightliner for snow clearing. The equipment was scheduled to arrive in October 2023, but is now delayed until February 2024.
- applied for funding from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and ACOA to implement two projects associated with phase 2 of the Exploits River Development Strategy – namely, "Marketing the Bishop's Falls Exploits River Assets" and the "Fallsvue Municipal Park Development Plan." The province approved its share of the projects, and we anticipate favourable decisions from ACOA.
- submitted an application for \$25,000 under the New Horizons for Seniors Program to host sewing classes and fall/Christmas craft workshops in 2024.

- developed and instituted Codes of Conduct for Council and municipal officials.
- administered a tax sale process that included six properties.
- managed 16 amendments to the municipal plan and development regulations.
- organized the Memorial Day Service, Volunteer Appreciation Campaign, Remembrance Day Service, and *“Lookout! Here comes Christmas”*, which takes place on December 20, 2023.
- resolved/closed five formal complaints. Six remain outstanding and are being worked on in the context of municipal/provincial legislation.
- processed the following permits and licences:
  - 14 new dwellings (up 6 compared to 2022).
  - 2 demolitions (up 1 compared to 2022).
  - 8 extensions (up 2 compared to 2022).
  - 22 accessory buildings (up 15 compared to 2022).
  - 4 business licences (up 3 compared to 2022).

Finally, I want to formally acknowledge the Municipalities Tourism Champion of the Year Award that we received from Adventure Central during its AGM last month. I was honoured to accept the award on the Town’s behalf and to represent our collective efforts. We worked very hard over the past six years to develop the tourism potential of the Exploits River, and I know we are all grateful for the recognition. And there is still more to come!

That concludes my year-end report, but it would be very remiss of me if I didn’t express appreciation to Council and staff for your work and contributions over the past twelve months. Thank you for the many meetings, the long hours, the small things, and the large things. What we accomplish, we do so as a team, and everyone’s work is important and acknowledged.

I wish you, your families, and all residents a safe and happy holiday season.