

## NEWS RELEASE

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### For Immediate Release

### ***Mayor Deb Gilvesy reflects on progress made during 2023***

Tillsonburg, ON – As her first year in office draws to a close, Mayor Deb Gilvesy is feeling positive about what Council accomplished in 2023 and is looking forward to continued progress throughout 2024.

“We’ve had some challenges, but overall, we’re moving forward. We’re working collaboratively with staff to address the priorities named in the [Community Strategic Plan \(CSP\)](#) while continuing to address the day-to-day needs of citizens.”

“Nearly a quarter of the items in the Strategic Plan have now been completed,” says CAO Kyle Pratt. “Of the remaining items, more than two-thirds are in process, leaving just slightly more than 10% left on the to-do list.”

The Town of Tillsonburg adopted the Community Strategic Plan in June 2021 following extensive consultation with internal and external stakeholders. In April 2023, Council [reviewed and updated](#) the Plan.

“Like many municipalities, Tillsonburg is feeling pressures related to affordable housing, homelessness and access to health care,” explains Gilvesy. “These are complex issues that require an incredible amount of community dialogue and inter-governmental collaboration.”

Gilvesy points to Tillsonburg’s new cold-weather shelter, run by Operation Sharing at Avondale United Church, as a positive step forward. The opening of The Lighthouse, a United Way transition house, and the completion of Tillsonburg’s first Habitat for Humanity project are also noteworthy.

In 2024, the Town will continue working with Oxford County to develop an affordable/attainable housing project at 31 Earle Street.



“Tillsonburg was the third fastest growing community in Canada according to the last census data, and that presents challenges with regard to amenities, traffic and service levels,” says Gilvesy.

In 2023, Council adopted its first 10-year capital plan and is continuing to implement an asset management plan.

“It’s critical to have good information and understand what level of investment is needed not only in the short term, but also in the years to come. That big picture perspective is the key to maximizing tax dollars,” Gilvesy explains.

Attracting commercial and industrial investors is also imperative to help alleviate the pressure on the residential tax base.

In 2023, the Town sold the last of the lots in the Van Norman Innovation Park, and is now moving on to create a second site for commercial and industrial investment.

Tillsonburg’s Transportation Master Plan is currently underway and is expected to be reviewed by Council in 2024.

Financially, the Bayham Drive capital project finished with more than \$100,000 in savings, and the Town’s Fire Communications division received \$1.2 million in provincial next-generation 911 funding. The Fire Communications division currently has 29 contracts to provide dispatch service across the province.

The Tillsonburg Regional Airport has also been growing. Five new hangars were constructed this past year and a new charter service is now operating at the facility.

“The Community Strategic Plan focuses on advancing Tillsonburg in five key areas: lifestyle and amenities; customer service, communication and engagement; business attraction, retention and expansion; community growth; and connectivity and transportation,” says Pratt. “Council has directed staff to undertake a variety of initiatives in each of these areas. Some projects are larger than others, but all are key to moving the community forward.”

“Enhancing two-way communication with the public has been a particular priority of mine this Council term,” says Gilvesy. “Transparency around decisions is important. Feedback is important. Our new corporate website and mobile app have made it easier for citizens to interact with us. Residents can use these electronic tools to quickly search for and find the information they need, as well as more efficiently report problems and concerns as they see them.”



For businesses, a new automated business directory on the Town's website also enhances communication by enabling business owners to update information about their operations without needing to rely on staff.

"It's a little thing, but it makes a difference," says Gilvesy. "Instead of manual updates done by staff on an infrequent basis, the business directory can now be updated by business owners themselves. This process not only results in operational efficiencies, it also improves the accuracy of the information."

The Town has also taken steps to make it easier for young people to interact with the municipality.

"We now have a Youth Advisory Council which provides an opportunity for youth to provide input on all kinds of Town issues," says Gilvesy. "Young people are learning about how local government works, and participating in shaping the Town's future in a meaningful way."

In terms of improving the overall quality of life for residents, 2023 was a year of significant investment in the Town's recreation assets.

A \$5.1 million aquatics rehabilitation project is continuing at the Tillsonburg Community Centre with an anticipated completion date of summer 2024. Meanwhile, the Lake Lisgar Waterpark bathhouse received a \$1.2 million facelift, including new barrier free washrooms. Two new parks opened in north Tillsonburg and both Library Park and Elliott Fairbairn Park received brand new playground equipment.

More than 60 free skating and swimming opportunities were held throughout the year thanks to the generosity of local businesses, while pickleball and youth floor hockey were added to the Town's recreation offerings.

At Annandale National Historic Site, the free Canada Day Fun Fair drew 350 families to the museum, and attendance figures increased over 2022.

To learn more about Council's strategic priorities and progress to date on the Community Strategic Plan, visit [www.tillsonburg.ca/cspq3](http://www.tillsonburg.ca/cspq3).

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### **About Tillsonburg**

Located 90 minutes west of the Toronto area, Tillsonburg offers companies a strategic location in Ontario's agriculture and manufacturing heartland. With low business and development costs, progressive policies and a high-speed fibre optic network, Tillsonburg is home to more than 600 regional, national and international companies. To find out more about Tillsonburg, visit [www.tillsonburg.ca](http://www.tillsonburg.ca).

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