



**AGENDA**  
**Strategic Priorities Committee**

September 19, 2023

9:00 am

Council Chambers, Town Hall

175 Queen Street East, St. Marys

YouTube Link - <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzuUpFqxcEI8OG-dOYKteFQ>

**Pages**

1. **CALL TO ORDER**
2. **DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST**
3. **AMENDMENTS AND APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

**RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT** the September 19, 2023 Strategic Priorities Committee agenda be accepted as presented.

4. **STRATEGIC PRIORITIES REVIEW**

**4.1 ADMIN 51-2023 Confirmation of Council's Corporate and Strategic Priorities**

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**RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT** ADMIN 51-2023 Confirmation of Council's Corporate and Strategic Priorities report be received; and

**THAT** the Strategic Priorities Committee recommends to Council:

**THAT** the list of Corporate and Strategic Priorities be confirmed; and

**THAT** the following be considered "top priorities":

1. ....

2. ....

**THAT** the correspondence received from the St. Marys Pickleball Association be referred to the Director of Community Services to bring forward in the planned 2024 update to the Recreation and Leisure Master Plan.

**5. CLOSED SESSION**

**RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT** the Strategic Priorities Committee move into a session that is closed to the public at \_\_\_\_\_ am as authorized under the Municipal Act, Section 239(2)(d) labour relations or employee negotiations.

**5.1 HR 07-2023 CONFIDENTIAL 2024 Cost of Living Adjustment**

**6. RISE AND REPORT**

**RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT** the Strategic Priorities Committee rise from a closed session at \_\_\_\_\_ am.

**6.1 2024 Cost of Living Adjustment**

**7. NEXT MEETING**

\*All meetings are open to the public to attend in person and will be live streamed to the Town's YouTube channel

October 17, 2023 - 9:00 am

**8. ADJOURNMENT**

**RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT** this meeting of the Strategic Priorities Committee be adjourned at \_\_\_\_\_  
pm.

# FORMAL REPORT

<b>To:</b>	Chair Stratthdee and Members of Strategic Priorities Committee
<b>Prepared by:</b>	Brent Kittmer, Chief Administrative Officer
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	19 September 2023
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>ADMIN 51-2023 Confirmation of Council's Corporate and Strategic Priorities</b>

## PURPOSE

Today's report summarizes the discussion of priorities that Council held on August 15<sup>th</sup>. Through this report staff is seeking Council's agreement of how the priorities have been written, along with direction on which of the priorities are "top priorities".

## RECOMMENDATION

**THAT** ADMIN 51-2023 Confirmation of Council's Corporate and Strategic Priorities report be received; and

**THAT** the Strategic Priorities Committee recommends to Council:

**THAT** the list of Corporate and Strategic Priorities be confirmed; and

**THAT** the following be considered "top priorities":

1. ....
2. ....

**THAT** the correspondence received from the St. Marys Pickleball Association be referred to the Director of Community Services to bring forward in the planned 2024 update to the Recreation and Leisure Master Plan.

## BACKGROUND

The corporate Strategic Plan (2017) has served the Town well over that last eight years. However, the Strategic Plan needs an update. Council and the CAO have agreed to delay this update to allow staff to close out several corporate projects that are in process.

Prior to a new strategic plan being developed, it is still helpful for Council to agree on what the key priorities are for the Town in the short-term. Direction regarding priorities allows the senior leadership team to develop their departmental plans, and to ensure they are preparing their annual budgets to reflect the priorities of the Corporation.

After this direction is provided, senior staff will blend Council's priorities with departmental and operational priorities identified by staff. The final product is a departmental workplan that guides the work of the department from anywhere between one to five years.

## REPORT

As a reminder from the August 15<sup>th</sup> Strategic Priorities Committee report, the Town has several large projects underway. These projects are the result of previous priority setting sessions and budget approvals and will be substantially completed prior to undertaking the next formal strategic plan. The list below is not meant to be a comprehensive list of all the good work underway by staff. The list presents those projects considered to be more resource intensive than the Town's "typical" projects:

Department	Project
Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Downtown Service Location Review</li><li>• Electronic Records Management Procurement and Implementation</li></ul>
Building and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Housing Action Plan Implementation:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Land Inventory Review</li><li>◦ PPP Housing Partnership</li></ul></li><li>• 14 Church Street Interior Demolition</li><li>• Town Hall Interior Renovations</li><li>• Flats Washroom Upgrades</li><li>• Community Improvement Plan Review</li></ul>
Community Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Skate Park Expansion</li></ul>
Corporate Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ERP Implementation (Lead Department)<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Finance and Human Resources Modules</li></ul></li><li>• Milt Dunnell Park Master Plan</li><li>• Asset management action plan, long-term financial strategy</li><li>• Cyber security policies and readiness</li></ul>
Fire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Emergency Management Modernization Project</li></ul>
Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ERP Implementation<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Human Resources Module</li></ul></li></ul>
Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strategic Plan Implementation</li></ul>
Public Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• WPCP Upgrades</li><li>• Landfill EA</li><li>• Road Network Safety Plan</li><li>• Corporate Climate Change Action Plan</li></ul>

It is staff's expectation that a number of these projects will be substantially completed, or at least well underway, within the next 6 months. Once that milestone is achieved, the organization will have the capacity to begin the more formal process of strategic planning, a process that could take 12-18 months.

As noted, in the interim it is important to have direction from Council on the corporate and strategic priorities so that staff ensure the organization and the community continue to move in the right direction. Staff's goal for this report is for Council to review the summary of the priorities discussed at the August 15, 2023 Strategic Priorities Committee meeting. A chart summarizing the priorities that the CAO heard Council discuss is attached next in this report. Through this report, staff are seeking the following confirmation:

- Does staff's understanding and articulation of Council's priorities match Council's?
- Of the priorities listed, which are considered to be "top priorities"?

So Council is aware since the August 15<sup>th</sup> meeting, correspondence has been received from the St. Marys Pickleball Association. The letter is attached to this report. In summary, the Association is requesting that Council prioritize a review of the growth of racket sports and the need for racket sports facilities.

For context, a similar review was completed during the creation of the 2017 Recreation and Leisure Master Plan (RLMP). The 2017 RLMP provided the following regarding racket sports:

## 6.12 Tennis Courts and Pickleball Courts

### Supply

The Town provides four lit tennis courts at the St. Marys Tennis Courts. The tennis courts are in good condition as resurfacing was completed by the Town in 2013. There are presently no outdoor pickleball courts provided in the Town.

### Market Trends

A 2014 participation study undertaken by Tennis Canada found that more than 6.5 million Canadians played tennis at least once over a 12 month period, a growth of more than 32% since 2012. This study also found that the popularity of tennis is growing among Canadians as 51% of the population indicated that they are somewhat or very interested in the sport, which is an increase from 38% in 2012. This trend is on par with research that suggests that the sport is experiencing a resurgence over the past several years.

The sport is predominantly played by the baby boomer community, though there is also a growing focus on promoting the sport at the youth level through club memberships for youth and programming opportunities that emphasizes the Long Term Athlete Development model. Tennis Canada reported that in 2013, more than 600,000 children between the ages of six and 11 played tennis.

The baby boomer generation has created a small boost in tennis and related racquet sports as participation trends suggest that older adults have a greater desire to remain physically active in their retirement years. The aging tennis playing community as well as those seeking a slower form of tennis has also driven the popularity of pickleball, which has become one of the fastest growing sports in Canada. Pickleball is a lower intensity paddle sport that can be played on modified tennis courts (it requires a badminton-sized court and a net that is slightly lower than tennis height). The sport recently debuted at the Ontario Senior Games and is easy for beginners to learn, but can develop into a quick, fast-paced, competitive game for experienced players.



St. Marys Tennis Courts

### Public Consultation

Participants at the Master Plan Launch Event made suggestions to improve the tennis courts in St. Marys, including installing a timer for the court lights, adding lighting to the adjacent parking lot, and varying views on painting multi-use markings on the courts to accommodate pickleball games. Comments were also received to construct new pickleball courts rather than utilizing the tennis courts. The tennis courts are currently utilized by the St. Marys Social Tennis Club, which has maintained approximately 45 members over the past three years. Through the stakeholder survey submitted by the Club, the cost of renting courts is currently the primary concern. In addition, Town staff indicates that the number of pickleball players is on the rise. For 2017, there are approximately 35 players (twice as many compared to 2015) that participate in indoor pickleball programming through the Friendship Centre.

The online community survey found that 15% and 8% of responding households participated in tennis and pickleball, respectively, in the past year, suggesting that these hard surface court activities have moderate to

low participation compared to other activities. There was also a moderate level of support for investing in tennis courts with 58% support. 34% of respondents supported investment in pickleball courts, which ranked last, suggesting that it may not be a high priority among respondents and, as a relatively new activity, may not be well-known.

## Utilization

According to Town staff, the St. Marys Social Tennis Club uses the tennis courts for two hours a night on Tuesdays and Thursdays whereas the general public has access to the courts outside of these hours.

## Needs Analysis

A population-based target of one tennis court per 4,000 to 6,000 residents is typically used to determine tennis court needs. With a projected population of 8,320 residents by 2026, the Town's four tennis courts result in a provision level that well exceeds typical levels.

From a tennis club perspective, a provision target of one club court for every 100 members is generally used to ensure that there are a sufficient number of club courts available to support simultaneous games and tournaments. The Club currently has a membership of 45 members. Typically, a club of this size does not require the use of four courts simultaneously, although all courts may be required a few times per year for events and tournaments. A club of this size may use up to two tennis courts on a regular basis.

As a result, there is merit in exploring opportunities to add pickleball playing boundaries to two of the existing tennis courts at the complex in order to respond to growing interest in the sport and requests for pickleball courts. Providing outdoor pickleball courts may also raise the profile of the sport in the Town and may work to attract new players at all ages. This strategy is the ideal approach to respond to pressures for outdoor pickleball courts as it enhances the use of existing municipal recreation facilities and resources, which is one of the primary objectives of the Master Plan. As pickleball is generally played during the day and the Tennis Club using the courts during the evenings, it is expected that scheduling conflicts will be minimal. However, the Town is encouraged to work with both groups to ensure that game schedules do not conflict between the two activities, particularly during tournaments and special events. In the application of pickleball playing boundaries, contrasting colours should be used to differentiate playing areas to avoid confusion between the two activities. The Town should also work with the Tennis Club and pickleball players to ensure that the nets are adjustable or changeable to respond to the needs of both sports. The need to expand the supply of outdoor tennis and pickleball courts should be evaluated during an update to the Master Plan, which should be based on court usage and demand.

## Recommendations – Tennis and Pickleball Courts

48. Delineate playing boundaries for pickleball on two of the existing tennis courts (tennis court lines are to remain). Consideration should be given to using a distinct boundary colour to differentiate playing areas in order to avoid confusion between the two sports as well as installing a strap system to allow the net to be adjusted. The Town should subsequently monitor utilization, as well as work with the St. Marys Social Tennis Club and pickleball players to ensure that game scheduling does not conflict between the two activities, particularly during tournaments and special events. The need to expand the supply of outdoor tennis and pickleball courts should be evaluated during an update to the Master Plan, which should be based on court usage and demand.

Within the CAO's report on August 15<sup>th</sup>, staff had flagged that a current "issue" in the community is increased growth in many recreational sports. This growth has been accompanied by increased requests regarding the playing facilities (ranging from requested upgrades to requested new facilities). In the August 15<sup>th</sup> report, it's noted by staff that much has changed since the 2017 RLMP meaning it is not always useful when navigating the requests staff are receiving today.

Because of this, staff will be presenting the 2024 budget with a proposed project to update the Town's Recreation and Leisure Master Plan. Through the project, the scope of work the consultant will complete will address each of the requests put forward by the St. Marys Pickleball Association. As a result, it is staff's recommendation that the letter received from the Association be referred to the Director of Community Services to be provided to the consultant that is eventually selected to complete the master plan update.

In the following pages, the CAO has presented a chart summarizing how staff heard Council articulate the priorities on August 15:

Strategic Area of Focus	Issue/Priority Statement	Lead? Supports?
<b>Pillar #1</b>	<b>INFRASTRUCTURE</b>	
Road Network Safety Plan <b>(2018-2022 Priority)</b>	<p>The Town is in the beginning stages of creating a road network safety plan to develop a methodical approach to implementing the spirit of Vision Zero in the community. The objective is to develop a traffic safety plan for the community that embraces the Spirit of Vision Zero, with a goal to reduce risk for pedestrians and motorists.</p> <p>As it is developed, this plan will need to consider the technical aspects of road safety improvement along with emerging community concerns and priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dangerous intersections (i.e. Church Street N and S)</li> <li>• Truck Traffic</li> <li>• Conversion of Yield Signs to Stops</li> </ul>	<p>Public Works</p> <p>Corp Svcs (Comms)</p>
Climate Change <b>(2018-2022 Priority)</b>	<p>Climate change is a reality that will impact the community and the Town's operations into the future. At present the Town does not have a formal Climate Change Action Plan, but work is in progress.</p> <p>The CCAP should take a practical approach and have regard to the Town's finite financial resources. The overall approach should be to adapt the recommendations of the GHG Reduction plan to St. Marys, and to take an opportunistic and incremental approach to implementing the final plan.</p>	<p>Public Works</p> <p>All</p>
<b>Pillar #2</b>	<b>COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING</b>	
External – Private Property Issues	<p>There is a growing, and conflicting, expectation of the Town's involvement in private property issues. There is an expectation that the Town should not be overly bureaucratic, should reduce red-tape, and be more lenient on requirements to follow standards and processes. There is an expectation that when an issue occurs on private property, the Town should take a direct role in correcting the issue, even if it is not within the Town's mandate.</p> <p>The Town needs to develop a strategy to communicate the scope of its responsibilities as it relates to private property.</p>	<p>Public Works Bld/Dev</p> <p>Corp Svcs (Comms)</p>
Youth Engagement <b>(2018-2022 Priority)</b>	<p>Over the years the Town's approach to youth engagement has varied and has been tailored to the changing needs of the youth stakeholders involved.</p> <p>At present, the Town's approach is informal, and a youth council does not exist. The Town should review and explore to determine if a more formal youth engagement strategy is required.</p>	<p>Corp Svcs</p> <p>Comm Svcs Bld/Dev</p>
<b>Pillar #3</b>	<b>BALANCED GROWTH</b>	
Business Licensing <b>(2018-2022 Priority)</b>	<del>Research, review, and report back on business licensing. Review the prevalence of businesses operating out of their homes, how these individuals comply with the Town's zoning by-law, if/how these businesses compete with the downtown, and how the Town can license them.</del>	
Service Levels - General	Requests for service level increases are a local government reality and will never cease to exist. As the Town continues to attract newcomers, new and diverse service demands will emerge. However, the	

Strategic Area of Focus	Issue/Priority Statement	Lead? Supports?
	<p>community's desire for increased service levels and faster responses conflicts with their desire for less taxes, and fewer fees. The organization's ability to continue to deliver increased service levels will become strained (if it isn't already) without adding organizational capacity.</p> <p>To assist with reconciling existing service levels and request for new:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consider a formal process exists to evaluate new requests prior to their approval (i.e. thresholds for community funding required, requirement to be tied back to a strategic plan, development of detailed financial impact statement, a review on the impact to organizational capacity, staffing needs, etc.).</li> <li>2. Consider a review of existing service levels, service demands, costs, organizational impact etc to develop a plan for the future on how best to manage this conflict between the desire for more services but less costs. Such a plan could help prepare the organization for an unpredictable Provincial government who is prone to downloads.</li> <li>3. In an effort to create additional capacity of staff, consider a review of the services currently directly delivered by the Town for their potential to be outsourced to a third-party.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Group of SLT</li> <li>2. All</li> <li>3. All</li> </ol>
Childcare	<p>There is a significant demand for childcare in the community, and long waiting lists. This issue is compounded by a lack of RECEs to staff licensed facilities, retirement of private in-home child care providers, and a lack of municipal licensing of providers.</p> <p>Complete a needs analysis to help develop determine what actions the Town can take to directly and indirectly create additional childcare spaces in the community. As a part of this analysis consider the possibility of municipal-licensing of home-based, strategies and advocacy efforts needed to encourage more RECEs into the field.</p>	Comm Svs
Public Transportation	<p>The community currently lacks public transportation. Services like taxis and Uber don't exist, Mobility Bus is demographic specific, and public transit is limited with GO eliminating services and PC Connect only offering fixed route schedule service.</p> <p>With the costs of personal transportation increasing, a lack of public transit options may impact the public's ability to participate in the local workforce, or to visit the Town for tourism and recreation reasons.</p> <p>Review and consider the steps the Town could take to facilitate the attraction of private transportation contractors to St. Marys.</p>	Admin
<b>Pillar #4</b>	<b>CULTURE AND RECREATION</b>	
Service Levels - Recreation	<p>The service demands related to recreation have grown since the pandemic.</p> <p>Each recreation and leisure group wants "more and better", and they want the ability to access the recreation and leisure preferences on demand without interference. Additionally, new needs and requests are emerging, included but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional soccer facilities</li> <li>• Baseball diamond upgrades</li> </ul>	Comm Svcs

Strategic Area of Focus	Issue/Priority Statement	Lead? Supports?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedicated facilities (i.e. racket sports)</li> <li>• Improved running tracks</li> <li>• Workout equipment</li> <li>• Extended hours for municipal recreation facilities.</li> </ul> <p>The Town of St. Marys Recreation and Leisure Master Plan was completed in 2017 and is now stale dated and is not always able to assist in navigating the development of solutions to these issues.</p>	
Strategic Vision - Quarry	<p>The swimming Quarry represents a significant opportunity to attract recreation tourism. The partnership the Town has with the SuperSplash water park has been highly successful and should be used as a model moving forward.</p> <p>A strategic vision should be developed for the Quarry to guide further investments into the facility and to guide how to promote and market this amenity. A focus should be placed on facilitating further third-party investments to avoid direct investment by the Town, along with the potential to outsource marketing and attraction services.</p>	Comm Svcs  Corp Svcs (EcD/Events)
PRC	<p>The PRC is no longer a destination of preference for weddings so there is a need to find a use for that large and recently renovated space in the community hall. At the core the Town' needs to ask and answer the strategic question of "what are we using the PRC for?".</p> <p>Once this question is answered, consider a strategy to host more conventions and regional events if it is determined there can be a balance between recreation and other uses. As a part of the development of this strategy, actively consider outsourcing to a promotor or promotions company to attract, promote and organize non-recreation uses (trade shows, concerts, etc).</p>	Comm Svcs  Corp Svcs (EcD/Events)
<b>Pillar #5</b>	<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>	
Serviced Industrial Lands  <b>(2018-2022 Priority)</b>	<p>Industry has played - and continues to play - a key role in the life of the Town in providing employment and economic stability. Seeking new opportunities to attract small, medium, and large industry is in the Town's best interests as part of its growth strategy.</p> <p>Complete the process of investigating land options, and develop a conceptual design for the preferred option to have serviced lands available for business expansion, retention, and attraction purposes.</p>	Public Works  Admin Bld/Dev Corp Svcs (Fin/EcD)
Marketing and Promotion of the Town's Unique Amenities and the Downtown  <b>(2018-2022 Priority)</b>	<p>As a community, the Town has a number of amenities (private and public) that make it an attractive community: strong industry base, hospital, schools, PRC, Friendship Centre, unique Downtown, recreation tourism, CBHFM).</p> <p>An opportunity exists to develop a marketing and attraction strategy around these amenities. Review and identify what makes the community of St. Marys vibrant and what makes St. Marys a unique place to visit and live.</p>	Corp Svcs (EcD/Events, Comms)

Strategic Area of Focus	Issue/Priority Statement	Lead? Supports?
	<p>Promote our unique niches and why people should come visit, live and invest. As a part of this strategy, promote the Downtown as a key face of the community, with a focus to marketing what makes the downtown special, its unique businesses, and its events.</p> <p>Evaluate and report back on the use of tourism kiosks for the downtown (funded from 2019 One-Time Modernization Grant).</p>	
<b>Pillar #6</b>	<b>HOUSING</b>	
Housing	<p>Take all steps within the Town's authority to develop new initiatives to encourage the development of attainable housing.</p> <p>In the short term, the Town needs to champion the short term milestones identified in the Town's housing action plan including: a municipal capital facilities agreement for housing; a re-draft of the procurement by-law; a review of lands that may be suitable for attainable housing projects.</p>	<p>Bld/Dev</p> <p>Corp Svcs (Fin) Public Works Admin</p>
<b>N/A</b>	<b>MUNICIPAL FINANCES</b>	
Tax Assessment	The Provincial tax assessment program has not had an update in many years. There is a risk that properties within the same class (i.e. residential) are not assessed correctly, and a risk that there may be a shift in the tax burden between classes. Complete a review to determine what steps the Town can take to create a level playing field within the residential tax class.	Corp Svs (Fin)
<b>INTERNAL</b>	<b>EMPLOYEE RELATIONS</b>	
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	Actively work towards goal 4.1 of the Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan and develop a formal framework which articulates how the Town will increase the application of diversity, equity, and inclusion practices within the Corporation.	HR
Compensation Program	<p>The Town recently implemented a new compensation program to become a 60th percentile payer in its comparator group.</p> <p>Certain specialized positions continue to turnover, with wages referenced as being one retention issue. In addition, the current grid there is a significant drop-off in wages after the management bands, and there is a concern that the lower levels of the grid may be lagging compared to the upper levels of the grid.</p>	HR
Staff Engagement Survey	The Town completed staff engagement surveys in 2015 and 2019 to better understand the needs of its workforce. Much has changed since 2019 and its likely that this document can now be considered to be stale dated and should be updated.	HR
Staff Engagement Interviews	<p>The demographics and needs of the modern workforce are changing. Expectations of work life balance, supports for family/mental health/etc issues are now the norm.</p> <p>The Town is a small, nimble and progressive employer that needs to understand why candidates choose St. Marys as an employer, and why long-term employees choose to stay. Understanding these strengths will help the corporation to adapt and implement strategies to retain staff.</p>	<p>HR</p> <p>All</p>

Strategic Area of Focus	Issue/Priority Statement	Lead? Supports?
Organizational Structure	<p>The Town's structure is relatively flat, meaning there is not many layers between hourly staff, management, and senior management. In addition, the average of the Town's management staff is young. These two organizational characteristics make it difficult for aspiring staff to have vertical movement within the organization.</p> <p>Investigate creative ways within the current organizational structure and compensation program to retain high potential staff prior to their departure.</p>	HR
Business Continuity Planning	<p>The Town does not have a formal succession plan. In its place a business continuity plan is used to identify the key tasks of a position, how they will be delegated as a vacancy arises, and the positions within the organizational chart that need to be trained to take on these additional duties.</p> <p>The business continuity plan is not always well used as vacancies arise, and is due for a review an update. As part of the update, consideration should be given to if a formal succession plan should replace the business continuity plan.</p>	HR  All

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Understanding Council's priorities allows the senior team to develop departmental workplan that guides the primary work of the department from anywhere from one to five years. The workplan also drives any budget requests that may come forward in the draft annual budget.

## SUMMARY

As Council is aware, it is the CAO's opinion that the existing Strategic Plan (2017) has served its purpose and needs to be updated. Although it has been agreed to defer the process of strategic planning to allow Town administration to close out several large projects that are underway, it is still important for Council to discuss and agree upon the priorities for the community and Corporation. This will help ensure that the departmental plans developed by staff remain responsive to the needs of the community and in line with Council's expectations.

Through this report, staff are seeking the following confirmation:

- Does staff's understanding and articulation of Council's priorities match Council's?
- Of the priorities listed, which are considered to be "top priorities"?

## STRATEGIC PLAN

☒ This initiative advances Council's Strategic Plan by serving as the confirmation of priorities.

## OTHERS CONSULTED

Senior Management Team

### Report Approval Details

Document Title:	ADMIN 51-2023 Confirmation of Council's Corporate and Strategic Priorities.docx
Attachments:	SMPA Proposal
Final Approval Date:	Sept 13, 2023

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Brent Kittmer



12 September 2023

Good day,

First of all, we wish to thank the town staff and council for the great support shown to sports in town and in particular to both pickleball and tennis.

This letter is in regards to the special meeting of council held 15<sup>th</sup> August 2023 that discussed the 2023/24 strategic priorities, whereby town staff submitted draft priorities for council to consider for 2023/24.

According to the submission there are a number of issues relating to recreational activities identified. While it is recognized that there are many competing priorities, we are somewhat surprised and disappointed that these recreational issues received little or no discussion.

Identified recreational issues as submitted by town staff:

*Additionally, new needs and requests are emerging, included but not limited to: Additional soccer facilities · Baseball diamond upgrades · Dedicated facilities (i.e., racket sports) · Improved running tracks · Workout equipment · Extended hours for municipal recreation facilities*

The Town of St. Marys Recreation and Leisure Master Plan was completed in 2017 and is now stale dated and unable to assist in navigating the development of solutions to these issues.

If you recall back in September 2021 at a Special Meeting of council that dealt with Strategic Priorities, a proposal was made to have the lines painted on the north courts for pickleball. This motion was carried (resolution 2021-09-21-04) and the lines were successfully painted.

Also, if you recall there was a second resolution made and approved by council that stated:

*That Council direct staff to further explore the future of racket sports in St. Marys*

It is not clear if any results of the review were reported back to council and if the results were made public. At the time it was thought that this review was to consider the growth factors and the best solution for the future, i.e., dedicated facilities or continue with a dual-purpose facility.

Nonetheless, time has passed by and the growth seen by pickleball and tennis continues.

The growth in many sports in town will no doubt put pressure onto the existing facilities. Pickleball, soccer and tennis are key recreational activities that have shown significant growth during the past number of years.

Pickleball is not only seeing rapid growth but also a change in its age demographics. We are seeing the younger “working” generation venturing onto the courts in greater numbers. In addition pickleball is part of physical education at the high school meaning that the number of youth players is increasing. Tennis themselves are also showing a growth in numbers. The St. Marys Tennis Club has held a number of successful “get to play tennis” evenings and youth clinics. This change in demographics is adding pressure as these players want to enjoy their activity during the same hours.

Daytime pickleball playing is also seeing growth. Many groups are playing together, drilling (practicing) together and taking advantage of the courts during the day time. Earlier in the year 113 new players that had never played pickleball before took a “learn to play pickleball clinic”. Many have become members of the St. Marys Pickleball Association while others have opted to continue to play with friends and family without joining the SMPA. It is safe to say that there are many people playing pickleball today that are not members of the SMPA.

As you know playing pickleball and tennis or any other recreational activity offers various health benefits, including improved cardiovascular fitness, weight management, muscular strength, balance and coordination. The social aspect contributes to interaction with others, reduces stress and has a considerable positive effect on the mind and the overall health of an individual. The result of this is an improved health and well being of the overall community.

Over the next several years it is anticipated that the demand for court time will only grow from both tennis and pickleball. This could put undue pressure on the two clubs and their players with potential conflicts occurring.

The 2017 Recreational Strategic Plan states that a five-year high-level review was to be conducted in 2022. It is unclear if this review was completed. The Strategic Plan itself is basically stale-dated and has been overtaken by many factors.

Pickleball players realize that there are competing priorities and that costs to build pickleball or tennis courts should not land solely on the Town, and that a strong working relationship is required between the two clubs and Town staff.

A prime example of a good strategic working relationship is Goderich, population of 7881 (2021 census). The town and pickleball players worked together. The town identified and assigned the land. Pickleball players in conjunction with the town raised the money through grants and donations to build dedicated pickleball courts as well as re-surface the existing tennis courts. St Marys, with a population of 7,694 (2021 amended census) is very similar in size. The main issue for St. Marys is where to locate a new facility.

This is the perfect time to again explore the future for racket sports in St. Marys. Waiting a “few” years as indicated in the submission by town staff doesn’t seem to address the present desperately needed increase in capacity required for pickleball.

With that background the following Initiatives, as outlined in Appendix A, are submitted for council’s consideration and, if approved, added to the Strategic Priorities for 2023/24.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carol Venn	President, St. Marys Pickleball Association
Steve Lawton	Ex Officio Member
Dan Ferguson	Executive Member
Mike Ferguson	Executive Member
Merlin Leis	Executive Member
Nikki Martin	Executive Member
Ian Moore	Executive Member
Jantje Scheele	Executive Member
Lisa Vandenheuvel	Executive Member

## APPENDIX A

### Submission of Initiatives for Strategic Pillar 4: Culture and Recreation

#### Recreational Services Master Plan

Over the last year both Pickleball and Tennis have experienced growth in players. It is anticipated that this growth will continue and put added pressure on the use of courts by both clubs.

As Town Council is currently reviewing its priorities for 2023/24 and noting that no initiatives have been proposed by staff to council for recreational activities during this review, we the undersigned ask council and staff to consider adding the following short-term initiatives to Strategic Pillar 4: Culture and Recreation for the 2023/24 year.

- 1) That the Town and the Pickleball and Tennis club(s) complete a review of growth within the town of St. Marys for both sports and determine the best solution for racket sports to manage that growth.
- 2) That a review of land for the build of dedicated pickleball or tennis courts be conducted, and that land once identified be assigned to such a build.
- 3) That the Town and club(s) develop a strategic fund-raising campaign for future deployment for raising the money for such a project.

Note: it is recognized that access to grants would require the assistance and knowledge of town staff, however the club(s) would be willing participants in identifying possible sources.