



Rideau Lakes

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February 1, 2021 Statement from Mayor Hoogenboom

Clarification on Portland Revitalization Efforts

I wanted to take an opportunity to update the community on our efforts to revitalize the Village of Portland. It is critical the community focus on reliable and accurate information. For reasons unknown to many, there is a small minority who wish to derail efforts to improve Portland and its economic and social future.

We have come a long way so far this term in delivering on our goals of support to all of our villages. From parks, to halls, to business support programs, to streetscapes, we have made strategic investments to further leverage private investment and improve village life.

I am not going to suggest we have been perfect, and there will be bumps along the way as we move forward. Community renewal can be a complex and 'messy' process. We rely heavily on the good will and input of the community as we discuss and negotiate potential future investments and long-term visions.

All this being said, I would like to reiterate to the community the developments to date in Portland and how we are moving forward:

- Our 2015 Strategic Plan identified village vitality, economic development, infrastructure renewal, and financial sustainability as the four key priorities.
- The former Gallagher property was acquired in 2018 due to its prominent location within the community, its future development potential, and to counter a decade of landowner neglect.
- An inclusive and independently led visioning exercise was undertaken in 2019.
- The current municipal facility in Portland is well used and loved by the community. It is home to the community hall, as well as a volunteer-led community clothing co-op and food bank.
- Engineering and building condition assessments have been undertaken which indicate the facility is at its end of useful service life, and a major rehabilitation or replacement needs to be planned for.
- In 2020, a decision was made by Council to replace the existing community hall. This followed a detailed cost estimate by a contractor that showed the cost to bring the current facility up to a more modern standard was comparable to the estimated replacement cost.
- The current library facility in Portland is a rented location with a poor layout for delivery of services and community use.

- Building on conceptual work completed in 2017, which sought to understand the opportunities for cost efficient models of development based on a mixed-use approach, Council issued an RFP for architectural services for a potential mixed-use facility.
- Uses contemplated include the community hall, community services (like the clothing co-op and food bank), a library, administrative offices, harbour master/tourism facilities, public washrooms, etc.
- Mixed uses make sense – by sharing common facilities, such as washrooms, kitchen, meeting rooms, etc., costs of developing needed facilities can be materially reduced.
- The decisions around what uses will be included in any new facility in Portland will be made in consultation with the community, with the discussion being led by the independent architect, once selected by Council.
- The final decision will rest with Council. Council has an obligation to manage public funds prudently, to be strategic in making investments, and to think about not only what the community needs today, but what will make it a vibrant and viable village in the coming years and decades. Council also needs to consider the impact on the whole Township.
- It is important that everyone allows the process of consultation and decision-making to unfold. Misinformation campaigns, rumors and emotional appeals only serve to undercut Township-wide confidence in making local/village-specific investments.

An investment in a Portland municipal facility will certainly be significant. It is, however, an opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to our villages' futures, an opportunity to showcase and lead environmental and energy innovation, and an opportunity to consolidate jobs and investment in a central Township village.

Please be patient. Please be open. While constructive input will always be welcome, we need to get this right for all our taxpayers.

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