



## MEDIA RELEASE

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RE: Amherst mayor gives state-of-the-town address to local Rotary Club

**AMHERST, Nova Scotia** – The Town of Amherst continues to be a great place to live, work and play, says Amherst Mayor David Kogon.

The mayor made the comment on Monday, Jan. 9, 2023, while giving his annual state-of-the-town address to the Amherst Rotary Club.

“We continue to be in a strong financial position,” Kogon told the Rotarians, as he pointed out the tax rates for residential, resource and commercial properties during the current fiscal year were unchanged from the previous year – despite inflationary pressures.



MAYOR DAVID KOGON ADDRESSES THE AMHERST ROTARY CLUB. (TOM McCOAG / TOWN OF AMHERST)

In addition, he said the province’s latest municipal financial indicator report indicates the town has prudent debt levels, strong operating reserves, are effective in collecting taxes and provide good assessment management.

“The province considers us to be low risk for financial instability,” Kogon said.





This sound financial position has allowed the town to continue its efforts to improve its infrastructure. As examples, the mayor pointed out the town invested \$210,000 to install a new storm sewer, curbs and paving of Boylston Avenue, between Milford Street and Elmwood Drive and invested \$225,000 on a new storm and sanitary sewers, curbing and paving between Croft and Church streets.

In addition, Kogon pointed out that \$120,000 was invested to install new curbing and pave Mitchell Court, a new subdivision, and another \$513,000 to pave all or parts of Chandler Road, Harding Avenue, McCully Street, Brownell Avenue, Dale Street, Rosewood Drive, Davison Street and Prince Arthur Street.

The investment in our infrastructure didn't stop there. The Town also upgraded a sidewalk on South Albion Street, installed a new sidewalk on Regent Street, installed a sun shelter and fountain at the Amherst Lions Skate Park, opened a new walking trail between Willow Street and Abbey Road, built a new beach volleyball court and assisted the Amherst Little League by building a retaining wall for their third field.

The town remembered its history when it restored the cenotaph in Victoria Square. The work was done by Heritage Grade Architectural Restoration Service of Ottawa and now the cenotaph looks as it did when it was first unveiled in July 1921. It was rededicated on Jun 6, 2022, the 77<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day.

Steps to make Amherst a greener community continued in the past year, the mayor said, with the purchase of a new electric-powered Zamboni, the installation of a two fast chargers for electric-powered vehicles and the installation of two solar fields – one by the water treatment plant in Fort Lawrence and on near the water reservoirs on Willow Street. The solar fields were installed as part of the province's solar electricity for community buildings program.

The commitment to make the town more accessible resulted in a \$65,000 investment to install paved accessible walkways in Dickey Park, Amherst Lions Park and the park on Elmwood Drive, as well as renovations to the council chambers to make it more accessible. This included the installation of a new camera and sound system in order to provide people access to council and committee meetings via a live feed over the internet.





An accessibility strategy that will guide the town's future efforts in becoming more accessible is also being developed and should be released later this year, Kogon said.

Also scheduled to be released later this year is the town's inclusion, diversity and equity strategy, which is currently under development by the town's Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Committee.

"We will shortly be seeking input from individuals and organizations for this strategy," Kogon said. "We will use that input to help us develop this important strategy."

As part of its ongoing commitment to ensuring full and equitable participation in our diverse community, the mayor said the town is now flying the Mi'kmaq Grand Council flag on a permanent basis and posted an anti-racism sign at the stadium that states: "We stand up against racism and discrimination and support fair play for all."

"We have clearly heard from our businesses, economic development agencies and many other organizations that there is a lack of housing that crosses the entire spectrum of the housing market," the mayor added.

As a result, council has:

- Assisted Cornerstone in establishing a temporary homeless shelter
- Supported Cornerstone with funds for an executive director
- Rezoned land on Paradise Avenue so four, four-unit townhouses can be built
- Approved a development agreement that will allow three, 54-unit apartments to be built near E.B. Chandler Jr. High School
  - Purchased land on Ottawa Avenue and Blaine Street with the intent of making it available for housing development
  - Purchased a building on Prince Arthur Street in order to make it available to non-profit groups who would use it to develop affordable housing
  - Have been in discussion with housing developers re: ways the town can support them in future developments.

The town, Municipality of the County of Cumberland and the Town of Oxford have joined forces and established an Intermunicipal Poverty Reduction Advisory Committee, which has spent the past few months developing a strategic plan to reduce poverty. It is expected this strategy will be released later this year.





The town also joined forces with Cumberland County to conduct a feasibility study into a new, modern, multi-purpose community centre that would replace the venerable, but aging, Amherst Stadium, launched a review of our Municipal Planning Strategy and Land-Use Bylaw and is conducting a stormwater management study, the goal of which will be to produce recommendations to reduce the inflow of storm water into the sanitary sewer system and to provide recommendations to reduce the impact of localized flood during heavy rainfall events like we experienced last February.

In partnership, with the county and the Town of Sackville, Amherst continues to lobby the federal, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick government to speed up the timetable for protecting the Isthmus of Chignecto from flooding during extreme weather events like hurricanes.

With the lifting of COVID restrictions, the town was also able to celebrate several events this past year, including a Mawioi'mi in June, Canada Day, Fall Fair, Remembrance Day and the Santa Claus parade

The mayor also praised the town staff for providing excellent service to the town.

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