



IMAGINE VICTORIA'S FUTURE



2025-2030 STRATEGIC PLAN

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Police: Playfair display

1. THE CONTEXT

Since its foundation in 1819, Victoria has been at the centre of many changes in society as well as many challenges. In the 1871 Census Victoria, the site is described as a pretty and rapidly growing village thanks mainly to the shipbuilding and lumbering industry. By the second half of the 19th century, Victoria had three wharves to accommodate ocean trade, warehouses, a community hall, a school, general stores, a post office, a large covered rink, and houses spread along its central core. At that point, Victoria was a place for families and had a celebrated carnival and a hockey team. It was also known as a resort area and boat tours were organised from Charlottetown and elsewhere to visit Victoria. When in the late 1800's the main material to build boats was now iron, Victoria had to adapt but a decision not to construct a branch railway from North Wiltshire to Victoria set up the scene for the economic transformation of the village.

Later in the 20th century, the newly built Trans-Canada Highway bypassing Victoria and the expanding use of trucks made the need for boat transportation irrelevant. Victoria had to reinvent itself again after the two world wars and the incorporation of the Village of Victoria occurred in 1952. The first municipal services to be organised were the fire fighting services, street lights and the garbage collection. Victoria park was established shortly after that in 1961 and a new bridge was built on Causeway Road in 1965.

One of the main events of this era was the start-up, in 1967, of Tidewater Seafood that provided much needed jobs for the local population. Their products were sold mainly to Ontario and Quebec. The company also attracted visitors eager to taste their lobster. At that point a seafood industry as well as a tourism destination were

developing hand in hand in Victoria and there were eleven places of business in town including the Orient Hotel, Craig's store and post office, and the emergence of artists in the community.

Eventually, the Lobsterland restaurant opened on the wharf and the Victoria yacht club was inaugurated in 1972. A beautification project was also initiated in 1973, including the demolition of unsightly buildings and the re-decoration of public places such as the Community Hall. An important addition to Victoria's activities in the early eighties was the Victoria Playhouse, which enriched the visitors' experience by presenting original shows throughout the summer season.

At the same time fast expanding towns of PEI and other provinces, as well as the restructuring of the educational and health systems, polarized the younger generation towards urban centers to study and to work. Victoria gradually became a naturally occurring retirement community isolated from these trends. After the demolition of the ice rink in 1954, and the closing of its school and kindergarten, the village relied on its heritage and its distinct "personality" as a power of attraction for tourists. It was only a matter of time for a community of craftsmen and artists to flourish which contributed to the iconic nature of Victoria.

In the early stages of the 21st century, Victoria made contact with a new kind of industry: land based aquaculture. In 2008, Halibut PEI made its debut on Causeway Road. It was later bought by Amar Seafood from Norway who invested in the sustainable growth of halibut and wolffish to be sold mainly to the United-States. Amar Seafood announced its intention to expand its facilities in Victoria in 2025. In parallel, a Center for Aquaculture Technologies, now known as ONDA, opened in 2020 a new testing facility for the aquaculture industry. This gigantic laboratory announced in November 2024 its expansion in Brazil for

research in sustainable shrimp farming. Victoria is now at the center of the largest land based aquaculture production facility and research hub in Eastern Canada.

Two major housing developments also came into play in the years 2000. The Dunrovin Estates and the Dunrovin Shores were initiated and brought newcomers to Victoria.

One could say that, 206 years after its foundation by James Palmer, Victoria is now at a turning point. Its aging population of 139 (2021 Census) has stagnated in the last 75 years and the average revenue of its inhabitants is well below the provincial or federal levels. The Victoria community is struggling financially and suffers democratic exhaustion. It will have to make critical choices in the next few years in order to grow harmoniously with the relentless trends of inflation, immigrant population, new technologies, multinational businesses and diversified communities. The 2025-30 strategic plan of the Rural Municipality of Victoria represents a contribution, along with those of many other organisations, to sketch the future of one of the most beautiful villages in Canada.

2. THE PROCESS

The process of a strategic plan for Victoria was initiated by the Municipal Office that suggested to Council a nine months process in order to identify the priorities and the actions of the next five years. In May of 2024, Council approved the process and mandated the Chief Administrative Officer to manage the development of a 2025-30 plan.

The first phase of that process, in August and September 2024, was to make a Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis

about Victoria in order to clearly define its positioning in a fast moving social, economic and political environment.

Starting from there, a workshop held on October 19th 2024 was organised with Council members in order to identify five areas of interest for the Municipality. These areas were selected in consideration of the trends, threats and challenges Victoria is facing and in consideration of its jurisdiction as a municipality.

Once these areas of interest had been identified, focus groups took place with the participation of villagers and a variety of stakeholders involved with the future projects of the Village. The purpose of these meetings was to supply ideas and suggestions to broaden the scope of initiatives to be considered by the Victoria's Council.

The Council reviewed a first draft of the plan to identify the objectives and the major actions to be put in place in the community. At that stage, final decisions regarding the 2025-30 actions to be implemented remained, pending a public presentation of the plan.

This public presentation took place in February 2025 and villagers had the opportunity to ask questions and prioritise the actions included in the plan.

A final version of the plan was validated at a Council meeting in February 2025. The plan was later published on Victoria's website and in paper format.

3. THE VISION

“An inclusive and sustainable community focused on growth as well as preservation of heritage, while demonstrating respect in a welcoming seaside village.”

4. THE MISSION

“To provide meaningful and sustainable services to our residents while also promoting development and encouraging a welcoming community to all including tourists, potential new and current residents.”

5. THE VALUES

A welcoming community for potential new residents

Creative and cultural

Environmentally responsible

Respectful, integrity, reliable

Helping our neighbours

6. SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths

- Strategic geographical site along the Northumberland Strait with rapid access to cities and the bridge;
- Working local government;
- Experienced and resourceful population;
- Recognized heritage site frequented by local and tourist visitors;
- A well appointed harbour for fishing boats;
- Resilience amid governance challenges;
- Age-friendly community;
- Cultural hub and creativity;
- Public spaces and water and sewer infrastructures present for a small numbered population;
- Mix of light industrial and commercial activities;
- Fire Department in the Village

Weaknesses

- Stagnating population;
- Democratic exhaustion;
- Limited tourist experience results in limited time spent;
- Absence of family oriented services;
- Absence of transportation strategy;
- Absence of a heritage plan;
- Limited financial capacity for investing in improvements;
- Many W&S serviced lots remain undeveloped;
- Fragility of estuary and straight ecosystems;
- Fragile social cohesion;
- 9 month hibernation of Village activities;
- No coordinated marketing of Victoria development opportunities;
- Limited cultural activities;
- A number of hazardous and unsightly properties;
- Emergency measures need to be improved;
- No action from Provincial Government about Victoria Park

Opportunities

- Harmonious integration of light industrial and commercial activities;
- Enhancement of the tourist experience resulting in a longer stay;
- Many unoccupied, serviced lots could be developed;
- Unoccupied unserviced land could be developed;
- Unincorporated neighbouring area of Hampton interest to connect to municipal services;
- Amalgamation with other incorporated municipalities;
- Revitalization of Central Core;
- A reinvented provincial park;
- Heritage leisure icon can attract more retirees;
- Viable alternatives to age in place;
- Sale of municipal properties

Threats

- Lack of a shared vision of the future;
- Hazardous climate change impacts;
- 36% part time residents have an impact on social cohesion;
- Development of more vibrant tourist destinations elsewhere may impact future clientele;
- Danger of isolation from the development trends of immigration, housing developments, smart multi-cultural active retirement towns (SMART);
- Aging municipal assets;
- Financial challenges for RMV and its population;
- Diminution of use of the Playhouse;
- Absence of younger population limits entrepreneurship;
- Permanence of qualified personnel at the Municipal Office;
- Niche environment with limited services and job creation may impact long term real estate value;

7. THE FIVE AREAS OF INTEREST

In consideration of the SWOT analysis, Victoria's Council chose five areas of interest to address current challenges.

GOVERNING VICTORIA

Council members are mainly concerned by the long term **sustainability** of the Municipality. Talks and a study about possible amalgamation or expansion took place but no specific actions have been taken.

Other concerns are the **democratic exhaustion** and the instability of **municipal personnel** Victoria experienced in recent years. These concerns are clearly associated with the **lack of financial resources** and the difficulty to identify priorities and to plan ahead.

As an incorporated municipality, Victoria has to offer the public services planned in the Municipal Government Act. **Aging water and sewer infrastructures** are a main concern and their maintenance has to be carefully managed. Otherwise, a number of **bylaws have to be put in place** and be managed in areas such as dangerous and unsightly premises, heritage protection, traffic, parking, signage and others.

Lastly, the Municipal Office has to improve the **efficiency of the processes** used for water and sewer operations, fire services, procurement, and improve the management of **municipal assets**. **Capital investment and maintenance plans** have to be done and implemented.

DEVELOPING VICTORIA

Attracting new residents and new businesses in Victoria is the central focus of this area of interest. This includes the development of existing and new **subdivisions** and the possible **redevelopment of dilapidated buildings** scattered across the Village.

As mentioned in the mission of the 2024 Zoning Bylaw, special attention has to be paid to **develop the 46 empty lots** representing 31% of all Victoria existing lots.

Along with housing and business development, **new community services** such as retirement home and childcare facility projects could be developed.

The **revision of the 2024 Official Plan and the Zoning Bylaw** is key to identify possible development zones.

Streamlining of the permit application process is also an important step towards improved attraction of investments in Victoria.

ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The Municipality is engaged in **improving its emergency response capabilities**. Climate related risks analysis, training of volunteers and upgrades for the Reception Center are to be considered in the next five years.

IMPROVING COMMUNITY COHESION

Council members are also interested in building a **stronger community relationship** through transparent and inclusive communication.

Intensified communications with the villagers through diversified media could be an opportunity.

Otherwise, the Municipal Office will offer **support to existing and new community organizations** in order to maintain and possibly increase their number.

ENHANCING THE VISITORS' EXPERIENCE

The idea here is to **enhance the tourism experience** by preserving and promoting the Village's natural and cultural heritage.

Strategies to guide tourists to key historical and cultural sites, to **prolong the tourist season** and to **improve local business** have to be put in place along with a **better coordination of the operations** of the public spaces, shops, restaurants and the Victoria Playhouse.

On the infrastructure front, a **beautification plan** as well as a **circulation and parking plan** should be put forward.

The **implementation of the Dangerous, Hazardous and Unsightly Premises Bylaw** will be another beautification tool used by the Municipality starting in 2025.

8. DETAILED PLAN FOR THE NEXT 5 YEARS

1. GOVERNING VICTORIA

GOALS	ACTIONS	WHEN	FEASIBILITY
			LOW HIGH
Long term sustainability of the Municipality	1.1 Prepare a sustainability plan;	2025-26	VERY DIFFICULT WITHOUT PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT
	1.2 Assess feasibility of options;	2026-2027	
	1.3 Implement at least one option of the plan.	2027-2030	
Preventive maintenance of W&S infrastructure	1.4 Assess status of W&S systems	2025	AVAILABILITY OF EXPERTISE
	1.5 Revise W&S operational processes	2026-27	HIGH
Up to date regulations	1.6 Implement new bylaws as directed by Council including updating existing bylaws	2025-2030	HIGH
Improved efficiency	1.7 Optimise fire services management	2025-2028	FIRE MARSHAL RECOMMENDATIONS
	1.8 Optimise use of financial resources	2025-2030	HIGH

2. DEVELOPING VICTORIA

GOALS	ACTIONS	WHEN	FEASIBILITY LOW HIGH
Increased population	2.1 Contact and support developers for diversified housing development	2025-2030	LIMITED BUDGET AVAILABILITY
Increased number of services and businesses	2.2 Support implementation of new community services (retirement home, child care, etc) 2.3 Provide support to new businesses	2025-2030 2025-2030	AVAILABILITY AND SUPPORT FROM GOVERNMENT HIGH
Permit application process streamlined	2.4 Implement new development permit process	2025-26	HIGH

3. ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

GOALS	ACTIONS	WHEN	FEASIBILITY	
			LOW	HIGH
Emergency response capabilities improved	3.1 Equip Reception Center	2025-2026		HIGH
	3.2 Perform an EM Risks' analysis	2025		HIGH
	3.3 Develop program for ongoing EM Training of volunteers	2025-2030		HIGH

4. IMPROVING COMMUNITY COHESION

GOALS	ACTIONS	WHEN	FEASIBILITY	
			LOW	HIGH
Stronger community cohesion	4.1 Ensure sustainability of existing or new community organisations	2025-2030	DEPENDS ON INVOLVEMENT OF COMMUNITY	
Better communication with residents	4.2 Enhancing communication with residents with new media	2025-2026		HIGH

5. ENHANCING THE VISITOR'S EXPERIENCE

GOALS	ACTIONS	WHEN	FEASIBILITY
			LOW HIGH
A prolonged tourism season	5.1 Longer use of Victoria's Community Hall and Welcome Centre	2026-2030	DEPENDS ON INTEREST OF POSSIBLE USERS
Beautification of the village	5.2 Implement the Dangerous, Hazardous and Unsightly Premises Bylaw	2025-2030	HIGH
	5.3 Put in place a revitalisation program of Central Core	2027-2030	PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL GRANTS NEEDED
Better traffic and parking	5.4 Create and implement pedestrian traffic plan;	2027-2030	HIGH
	5.5 Create and implement car circulation and parking plan;	2026-2028	A LOT OF INVESTMENTS REQUIRED
	5.6 Create and implement a signage plan	2026-2028	INVESTMENT REQUIRED

9. CONDITIONS OF SUCCESS

As the reader can see in the detailed plan of section 8, the feasibility of this plan is linked to many prerequisites for success.

On a larger scale, the financial support of the Federal and Provincial Governments is crucial for most of the initiatives indicated in the plan. At the local level, strong political leadership as well as a unified approach by the Council are strong prerequisites for the plan's success.

The municipal government cannot proceed with this plan on its own. Each initiative/project requires that villagers and elected officials work hand in hand to identify the way forward, and hopefully, the best solutions to put into place.

One could say that the challenge here is not to succeed at every turn but rather to create the environment where villagers can better work together in order to face the present and future challenges.

10. MANAGING AND MEASURING THE IMPACTS OF THE PLAN

Once adopted by the Council, the strategic plan will be revised yearly by Council members in order to monitor progress and update it with situations as they arise.

A set of indicators, general in nature, will be reported on to monitor the progress made in the community. They are:

- Yearly investments/category;
- Number of development permits;
- Population change;
- Yearly number of visitors;
- Budget information

On a micro scale, each project will be monitored by the Municipal Office and its partners to measure progression.

11. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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