



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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Mayor's Annual Address

This annual address marks the end of a year and the conclusion of a term. Not only are we reflecting on the year that was but also the term, which is coming to an end following last week's municipal election.

The last few years have brought some of the toughest events in local and global history. In the early days of the term, we faced the loss of our dear colleague Deputy Mayor John Levi. John was a seasoned politician and community contributor who is greatly missed. Following John's passing, Council appointed Rick Minnille to the Deputy Mayor position, who has represented Mississippi Mills with charisma and heart.

Our community has shown its true character by coming together and supporting one another during difficult times – during the record-breaking flood event in 2019 that impacted our Municipality and many neighbouring ones as well; during the global pandemic and the devastating derecho we experienced this spring which is still very fresh for many of us.

By summer this year, life started to return to normal – meetings in person, community favourites like the Almonte Fair, Celfest, the Highland Games and Puppets Up! made a comeback. Next month the much beloved Light Up The Night will return, kicking off not only the start to the holiday season, but also the end of construction in downtown Almonte, at least for a little while.

This return to something closer to normal has been welcome news to business owners, who continue to set up shop throughout Mississippi Mills; to residents, who in droves are calling Mississippi Mills home, and to visitors, who increasingly make Mississippi Mills a destination of choice for shopping, dining and cultural experiences.

While life has returned to something more normal, we continue to think about those members of the community we have lost since the pandemic began. The community rallied around our long-term care homes, our first responders and healthcare workers; around neighbours needing help, and around local business. We all had to adapt and learn to respond to ever-changing scenarios. Whether, big or small, acts

of kindness and service to one another were the rays of hope that helped us build a better, stronger community. A lasting lesson from the challenges we've faced over the last few years is that kindness, gratitude, and community can help us weather any storm.

From changes on Council, to floods to the pandemic, to extreme weather and exceptional growth, the last four years have been a time of challenge and uncertainty. Despite this reality, the work of the Municipality has continued on.

Municipal staff, under the guidance of CAO Ken Kelly, have gone above and beyond to ensure service to the public continues as expected. On behalf of Council, I'd like to thank staff for your diligence, your professionalism, and your willingness to do what needs to be done in response to an ever-changing world. We are fortunate to have such talented and knowledgeable staff who work with dedication to the Municipality and its citizens every day.

Council has seen major projects completed in 2022 and continues to advance others:

- Responding to the enormous housing pressures in Mississippi Mills, Council approved seven initiatives to help remove barriers to affordable housing development, increase housing stock and to reduce the upfront costs. We're working with Carebridge to support a "Housing First Pilot Project" that will see the future development of affordable housing on municipally owned land on Victoria Street in Almonte.
- After many meetings and robust public engagement, we completed Official Plan Amendment 29 – the Prime Agricultural Area Review and update. This now sits at the County for review and their ultimate stamp of approval.
- We've continued to move forward with a digital strategy to modernize and streamline services, processes and communications.
- To understand what recreation, cultural and childcare services are being delivered well and to identify areas for improvement, we launched a Community Services Strategic Plan.
- This summer we unveiled the newly renamed "John Levi Community Centre" in Almonte where John spent many hours coaching ringette.
- For the month of September, we flew the Every Child Matters Flag. We have continued to partner with Mississippi Mill All My Relations to host a Vigil for National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30th. For the second year in a row, it was a well-attended and meaningful event for the community.

Looking forward to next year, the Municipality will be completing or undertaking several large projects:

- The Downtown Almonte Infrastructure Renewal Project is scheduled to be completed in July 2023.
- Proposed policy changes will be coming forward regarding Additional Residential Units in new Subdivisions. The goal is to make homeownership more achievable while also increasing our attainable rental stock, so that everyone in our community can have a place to call home.
- In 2023, we will be celebrating our Bicentennial all year long in all corners of our community. We will also honour and recognize this region's earliest inhabitants: the Algonquin Anishinaabe Nation and appropriate recognition is planned parallel to the 200th celebrations. I encourage everyone to get involved during the coming year. Let's come together and make more Mississippi Mills history. We have so much to celebrate!

As we wrap up the 2018-2022 term, I would like to thank my fellow Council members for your hard work during these exceptional times. We have gotten a lot done despite the challenges we faced this term. Thank you to staff for your expertise and advice and thank you to the community for your inspiration.