



For immediate release

Action Plan Received by Smiths Falls Council

Smiths Falls, February 7, 2011 -- The Town of Smiths Falls Council moved to receive the 2011-2013 Economic Development Action Plan, entitled *Turning Point: An Agenda for Action* at its Feb. 7th Council Meeting.

The Action plan is a culmination of efforts by four Task Forces charged with bringing Council recommendations on Tourism, Waterfront Re-Development, Downtown Master Planning and Arts & Culture in the community. The *Turning Point* document prepared and presented by Economic Development Manager Bob Cheetham sets out a roadmap of initiatives that Council should consider over the next three years.

In all, 48 recommendations deal with a variety of initiatives that are being presented for Council's consideration.

"*Turning Point* is an agenda for Council action and it follows a great deal of work and review of previous studies undertaken in the community," says Cheetham. "Obviously Council can not do everything at once but it can at the very least set out a plan for how it can move forward with revitalization of the local economy."

The Action Plan presents a number of priority capital projects involving everything from the re-development of the town's former water treatment facility and Parks Canada West Mill site on the Rideau Canal, to the construction of a bandstand, including food services and public washrooms on the upper basin. Additional priority projects could lead to a total re-development of the downtown area into a pedestrian friendly environment, to the construction of a boardwalk along the lower and upper basin waterfront that eventually links the community's three public museums.

"I am really pleased with the outcome of the four task forces and our Council now has a document that identifies priority areas for Council's consideration as we move forward," says Mayor Dennis Staples. "Bob Cheetham has captured a great deal of information and this Action Plan calls for Council action on a number of fronts, which we will have to take into account as we establish the 2011 municipal budget and update our strategic plan."

At the Feb. 7 meeting, council agreed to refer a motion to approve over 56 per cent of the Action Plan recommendations to the next meeting of Committee of the Whole for consideration and immediate action.

Sensational!



“I am particularly pleased that Committee of the Whole will be considering this motion on a variety of important recommendations that will allow the economic development department the ability to take action immediately,” says Councillor Chris Cummings, Chairman of the Downtown Master Planning Task Force. “The Downtown area presents some incredible opportunities and we can now begin the process of discussing potential development concepts with our private sector stakeholders.”

Councillor Dawn Quinn, Chair of the Waterfront Re-Development Master Planning Task Force, has worked hard to bring forward the development of a potential bandstand and full services facility on the waterfront.

“We need a defined location on the waterfront for festivals and community events and the potential development of the bandstand and services’ building is a must moving forward. I am very pleased with this action plan and how it has captured the outcomes of our efforts,” she said.

The 2011-2013 Action Plan outlines a number of important tourism initiatives that position Smiths Falls at the heart of Ontario’s only UNESCO World Heritage site, the Rideau Canal.

“As we look at how we create a unique community brand, we need to determine who we are, what our roots are and how we want to communicate that to the rest of the world,” says Cheetham. “Establishing a community brand is so important moving forward. It’s our DNA and we need to spend the right amount of time and effort getting it right,” said the town’s Manager of Economic Development.

“This Action Plan sets out clearly what it will take to develop Smiths Falls as a place people want to be, raise a family and run a business,” says Councillor Ken Graham, Chairman of the Town’s Tourism Task Force. “We have an responsibility to get it right and this will take a great deal of discipline on Council’s part to ensure we take appropriate action to meet our development needs and manage our fiscal demands. These are changing times and we need to be ready to seize opportunity as it arises.”

The Action Plan sets out new ways for managing economic development in the community and recommends that the structure for managing the economic development role be included in the municipality’s overall services review process. *Turning Point* calls for new partnerships and collaboration between healthcare providers and the private sector in the community to address both short and longer term healthcare services and physician recruitment in the community. The plan identifies a continued need to market existing industrial facilities globally and for fostering stronger linkages with Smiths Falls’ sister-city in Xiangyang, Hubei Province, China.



Over the past three years, Smiths Falls has been actively participating in attracting newcomers and new immigrants to the community and the Action Plan calls for continued support of programs that increase the potential for residential and new business attraction.

“We have been very successful with our efforts to make newcomers feel more welcome in our community and our new immigration portal website and Community Ambassador Program are important tools for strengthening our ability to respond to the needs of newcomers in our community,” says Staples.

Town of Smiths Falls CAO Wayne Brown says the 2011-2013 Action Plan “sets out an agenda that staff and Council can actively pursue together as we establish our 2011 budget and it also calls for continued stakeholder involvement as we set out our economic development initiatives over the coming months.”

“Many of the projects outlined in the Action Plan call for assistance from the senior levels of government and applications for funding will need to be submitted once Council has provided the necessary approval to move forward. We need to ensure we have the municipality’s share of the capital cost available,” he stated.

Council expressed its appreciation to the many community volunteers that participated in the individual Task Force initiatives and called upon continued community collaboration as the recommendations of the Action Plan are studied and actions are deliberated upon.

Turning Point: An Agenda for Action is a starting point that calls for continued vision, Council commitment, building overall capacity in the community, empowering others, making a long term investment and seizing opportunity as it presents itself.

In his concluding remarks, Cheetham reminded council “that economic development is a marathon, not a sprint and that consistent, deliberate action over many years will truly empower Smiths Falls to reshape its economy, its image and its potential.”

The *Turning Point: An Agenda for Action 2011-2013 Economic Development Action Plan* will be available for public viewing on the www.advantagesmithsfalls.ca website.



The *Sensational* Town of Smiths Falls is and will continue to be an excellent community in which to live, work, visit, and play and conduct business. For more information about the Town of Smiths Falls and all its excellent opportunities, please visit www.smithsfalls.ca or www.advantagesmithsfalls.ca

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For more information, contact:

Bob Cheetham

Manager of Economic Development

Town of Smiths Falls

(O) 613-283-4124, ext. 1107

bcheetham@smithsfalls.ca