

CECIL FOR
CLARKE MAYOR

**THE LEADERSHIP
YOU DESERVE**

TERM PRIORITIES

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Preface

This document serves as an outline and guide to the priorities Cecil Clarke will focus on as Mayor. These will be brought to Council immediately, providing the framework for the development of Council's Term Priorities. From this foundation, the Council will establish clear and accountable goals that will shape the direction of CBRM, ensuring alignment with community needs, financial responsibility, and long-term planning.

Term Priorities

1. Taxpayer First

Goal: Make decisions that give taxpayers the best value so they can get ahead. Focus on key services while leveraging federal and provincial funding.

- **Taxpayer First Declaration:** This will guide decision-making to ensure that every dollar spent provides value to taxpayers. All recommendations made by CBRM staff and Council decision documents will outline the following:
 - Does this apply to residential, commercial, or both?
 - What is the value for the taxpayer?
 - Is it a municipal mandate of the Municipal Government Act (MGA)?
 - Does it support core municipal services (Public Works, Water/Sewer, Parks & Rec, Police, Fire, Development)?
 - Does it leverage other government funding, community contributions or partnerships?
 - **Reduce Tax Burden:** Affordability is a huge concern, and high taxes are a part of that. Council will work with the Province to set aside the \$5 million a year from the Deed Transfer Tax into a Reserve Fund to help lower tax rates. Since this tax applies to both businesses and homes, the money should go towards easing the tax burden for everyone.
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2. Back to Basics

Goal: Focus on fundamental municipal services and make sure CBRM is running smoothly to meet people's needs.

- **Streamline Processes and Cut Red Tape:** Cutting down on bureaucratic delays is key to getting services out faster. CBRM needs to streamline areas such as business permits, housing approvals, and other important services. By cutting red tape, we can boost growth, make services easier to access, and improve overall efficiency.
 - *Create a CBRM App to accept building and development applications, issue permits and efficiently allow for inspections and reporting.*
- **Infrastructure:** Focus on core infrastructure like roads, wastewater treatment, and waste management by using long-term planning and smart investments.
 - *Cecil's previous work securing funding for the Dominion, Sydney, Westmount, Glace Bay and Port Morien Wastewater Projects improved essential services and significantly upgraded roads and sidewalks in those communities. New Waterford and the Northside are next.*
- **Community 24/7 Operations:** CBRM needs to move away from the 9-to-5 way of doing things. Public works and essential services should be available around the clock to meet the needs of the community and handle issues quickly.
- **Tax Billing Reset:** Recent Water/Wastewater bills have left many ratepayers confused and frustrated. The process wasn't explained clearly, and it wasn't easy for people to compare and understand the budget changes. Council will revamp how bills are presented

and make sure ratepayers have all the information they need right at their fingertips when they receive their bills.

3. Clean and Safe Communities

Goal: Make our communities places where everyone feels safe, comfortable, and proud by focusing on public safety and keeping things clean.

- **Lead by Example:** If we want residents to keep our communities clean, the municipality must lead by example. CBRM needs to maintain municipal properties, provide garbage cans in public spaces, and regularly empty and maintain them. This encourages everyone to take pride in their community.
- **Safe Streets:** Cecil implemented the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act. Criminal activity was not acceptable then and it is not acceptable now.
 - Cecil will visit each district with public safety officials and local councillors to discuss safety priorities, concerns and the wellbeing of citizens.
- **Clean Streets:** Litter needs to be addressed. Everything from coffee cups to biohazard waste like used needles need proper disposal. Our sidewalks, playground and beaches are not where those things should be.
 - *Cecil's leadership secured funding for 10 sharps disposal containers which were installed in 2020, but the program was not expanded upon, and gaps must be addressed. His plan includes expanding these efforts and increasing accountability for proper waste disposal.*

Clean and Safe Communities cont'd

- **Public Safety:**

- **Policing:** Increase patrols and expand video monitoring to help prevent crime. Build stronger partnerships with the RCMP for highway patrols and look into new tools for investigations and enforcement.
 - Police monitored public security cameras
 - Identify fixed and mobile radar locations or install speed bumps in problem areas
 - Active Bylaw investigation and effective enforcement of landlord problems
 - Open a full-service police station in downtown Sydney
- **Fire Services:** Re-establish sufficient multiyear fire truck purchase and transfer agreements throughout the CBRM. Fund turnout gear and equipment for volunteer departments so they are ready to focus on community safety. Invest in fire training, facility upgrades and renewal.
- **Emergency Preparedness:** Implement CBRM's All-Hazards Plan - currently in draft form - and partner with Nova Scotia's disaster response agencies.
- **Cape Breton Search and Rescue:** Increase their annual allocation and provide a long-term base for operations, logistics and storage.
 - *In 2012, under Cecil's leadership, \$25,000 in annual funding was allocated for the organization. Their needs and demands have increased. It is time to address the shortfall.*

Clean and Safe Communities cont'd

- **Addiction and Mental Health:** Having people with addictions and vulnerable populations on public display does not work.
 - Address public drug use with compassion yet accountability
 - Work with federal and provincial partners to expand prevention, intervention and treatment programs and provide adequate shelters.
 - We will strongly advocate for other government departments and agencies to fund adequate shelters, street social workers and street level mental health services .
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4. Community Empowerment

Goal: Empower our local organizations. They provide vital services and foster pride and belonging.

- **Support for Community Organizations:** Cecil will remove barriers that prevent community groups from thriving, with initiatives such as:
 - Establish core funding for community led festivals and events
 - Expand CBRM wide access to music, cultural and recreational programming
 - Provide event insurance coverage for local community organizations
 - Offering food handling and event hosting workshops to equip volunteers

Community Empowerment cont'd

- **Youth and Seniors Programs:**
 - Expand funding for youth crime prevention and intervention programs - working closely with community policing initiatives
 - Seniors' Advocate as part of the already established 311-support line in partnership with the provincial run 211, safety workshops, and increased digital literacy programs
 - Help close the gaps in funding for established youth and senior organizations
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5. Accessibility & Inclusion

Goal: Ensure all public spaces, services, and programs in CBRM are accessible to every resident. Projects need to be planned with accessibility in mind, not addressed as an after thought.

- **Diversity, Equity & Inclusion.** Barriers to participation take many forms, but Cecil is committed to breaking them down. He will see CBRM establish a standard that ensures every individual, regardless of their circumstances, is included and supported.
- **Public Space and Transportation:** Accessibility has to be a priority in public infrastructure design and maintenance. This includes improving transportation options and ensuring public spaces are accessible to all.
- **Accessibility 2030:** We will strive to meet the standards set out by the provincial mandate. Convene the Accessibility Committee to find out where CBRM is missing the mark, creating a list of priorities and acting on them.

Accessibility & Inclusion cont'd

- **Digital Inclusion for Seniors:** Provide seniors with access to and training for CBRM's digital services. Workshops promoting digital literacy will help them stay connected and informed.
 - *A local church provides lunch-and-learn sessions for residents of New Aberdeen, including topics like online safety. CBRM would partner with local organizations to host digital literacy workshops, reaching residents in their communities, teaching them how to use CBRM's online portals.*
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6. Transit

Goal: Expanding routes, supporting the Province's CBU led light rail study and moving from Handi-Trans to mainstreaming accessibility.

- **Growing transit service options:** The studies have been completed, but action has been insufficient to address our shortcomings or meet the demands of our growing community.
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7. Infrastructure Renewal and Investment

Goal: CBRM's infrastructure continues to age and needs significant investment.

- **Key Infrastructure Projects:** Focus on upgrading key infrastructure like roads and water systems to meet modern standards.
- **Worst First:** Return to Cecil's "Worst First" policy in relation to fixing roads and sidewalks.

Infrastructure Renewal and Investment cont'd

- **Modernizing Infrastructure for Growth:** Cellular service has become an essential service. As CBRM grows, infrastructure must evolve. This includes expanding digital infrastructure including cell service reliability and Wi-Fi access in public spaces to attract businesses and residents.
- **Sustainable and Resilient Infrastructure:** Infrastructure development must account for sustainability and resilience against climate change. Using green technologies can reduce future costs while protecting the environment.
 - *Cecil's previous work securing 100% funding from other levels of government for the Glace Bay and Port Morien Wastewater Projects demonstrates his commitment to meeting federal regulations and improving essential services; getting our fair share.*

8. Housing

Goal: Address housing challenges by increasing affordable options.

- **Homelessness Solutions:** Adequate shelters and transitional housing are essential. CBRM must ensure those without homes have safe, supportive spaces.
 - *Nova Scotia Housing has dozens of affordable housing units vacant waiting for repairs and renovations. Those empty units need to be upgraded and made available to individuals, families and seniors and get people into the housing they need.*
 - *Council will work with Nova Scotia Housing on a plan to ready those units.*

Housing cont'd

- **Surplus lots:** Empty but serviced lots (with water, sewer and power) can be found in every community. These lots can be developed through a new approach.
 - *The New Aberdeen Revitalization and Affordable Housing Society's pilot project, which Cecil supported when Mayor, has been a success. 11 "surplus" lots have been sold since 2017 and families are moving back into the area.*
- **Odd sized surplus lots:** Designate such properties as Mobile Lot or Tiny Home Lot for ease of planning and purchasing purposes.
 - *Governments spend a lot of time telling people what they cannot do. So instead, CBRM will give people alternative options. A standard bungalow couldn't be placed on an odd sized lot but perhaps a mobile or "Tiny Home" could.*
- **Housing for Seniors:** Prioritize affordable, accessible housing for seniors, allowing them to live independently and safely.
 - *22 affordable apartment units for seniors at 224 Pitt Street: Cecil volunteer consulted with the Future Growth Housing Cooperative, helping the board overcome bureaucratic hurdles. This follows the 20-unit Phase One of the project in Sydney Mines for which he secured funding.*
- **New Subdivisions:** Use provincial and federal infrastructure programs to speed up housing development through the creation of hundreds of new, serviced, subdivision lots.
- **Trusted Partner Certification.** Implement a Trusted Partner program to certify construction contractors and developers. Certification will reduce red tape, reduce wait time and improve outcomes.

9. Emergency Preparedness

Goal: Make sure CBRM is ready for emergencies and natural disasters, focusing on strong leadership, preparedness, and community safety.

Cecil led the CBRM through the 2014 Ice Storm, 2016 Flood, 2019's Post-tropical Dorian and each time the Municipality became better equipped to handle severe weather. And yet 2022's Fiona and the extreme snowfall this past winter has showed the Municipality is not as ready for devastating weather events as it can be. Cecil will make sure CBRM is not only ready to handle emergencies but also stands out as a model of resilience and leadership in tough times.

- **Lead by Example in EMO (Emergency Measures Organization) Situations:** CBRM has to take the lead in emergency preparedness, setting a clear standard for readiness. This includes implementing and maintaining the **All-Hazards Plan** and ensuring that all municipal departments are trained and equipped to respond swiftly to crises, from natural disasters to public health emergencies.
- **72-Hour Readiness:** Promote a "72-hour readiness" plan for residents while making sure the municipality has the resources to provide emergency services beyond that timeframe. CBRM must demonstrate leadership by being fully prepared with food, water, power, and shelter resources in case of an emergency which lasts longer than three days.
- **Partnerships and Coordination:** Establish strong partnerships with provincial and federal emergency services, as well as with local organizations like **Cape Breton Search and Rescue**, to create a unified response in times of crisis. CBRM must lead by example in coordinating efforts to ensure seamless cooperation.

Emergency Preparedness cont'd

- **Preparedness Drills and Communication:** Regular emergency drills for municipal workers and clear communication strategies for residents are essential. CBRM should take the lead in providing the public with accurate, timely information before, during, and after emergencies.
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10. Our Fair Share Plan

Goal: Secure CBRM's future by advocating for fair investment and government partnerships to take advantage of growth opportunities.

- **Championing Opportunities:** CBRM must ensure it receives its fair share of funding for infrastructure, housing, and clean energy.
 - *The CBRM has several projects, developments, and capital needs in order to support growth that goes beyond the current operating and capital budget. Including, but not limited to, a new Central Library, upgrading Centre 200, transit hub, parkade and securing a long-term agreement with the province for roads and service exchange.*
 - **Green Economies:** Sydney can become a hub for offshore wind and hydrogen energy, and CBRM must partner with federal and provincial governments to seize this opportunity.
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Within 30 days of swearing in:

Council will create a clear set of Term Priorities, organized by region, division (North, Central, and East) and district. These priorities will help guide the 2025 Budget, with input from citizens, community and business groups across all 12 districts, as well as consultations with the provincial government.

The **Council Term Priorities** will include a **4-Year Business Plan** and an **8-Year Forecast** to help with planning, operations, capital needs, and financial stability. They will also guide decision-making, set standards for measuring progress, and ensure accountability.

Within 90 days of swearing in:

Council will carry out a full external and internal review of how the CBRM is run. People need to trust that their municipality is delivering services efficiently and using tax dollars wisely. CBRM will ask the Province to partner and work with the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities (NSFM) to set a province-wide standard for municipal reporting and encourage the creation of a Municipal Auditor General who can provide annual reports to the Legislature through the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

It's time to rebuild public trust. Many view CBRM as “top-heavy” and not meeting basic service expectations. As part of the review, CBRM will ask the Province to help hire an independent audit firm to look at the **Council Term Priorities**, the **4-Year Business Plan** and an **8-Year Forecast**, and how the municipality is structured and delivering services to the public.

Annual Report Card

The CBRM will regularly seek input from the Cape Breton Regional Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB). Their feedback will be encouraged to help improve the region's business environment.

Reports like the CFIB's 2024 Atlantic Municipal Report and the 2022 CBRM Business Environment Survey have provided helpful insights from small business owners and serve as a call to action.

The Chamber of Commerce and CFIB will also be invited to join the annual budget consultation process to boost communication, reduce business barriers, cut red tape, and promote local economic growth.

In conclusion:

Cecil Clarke's priorities as Mayor of CBRM are part of an **8-year plan** to create a safe, vibrant community, built around his promise of "**The Leadership You Deserve.**" By focusing on putting **Taxpayers First**, getting **Back to Basics**, and ensuring clean, safe, and accessible communities, Cecil is ready to guide CBRM's growth while getting **Our Fair Share**.