



**Utilities**  
Kingston

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**STRATEGIC PLAN**  
**2021 - 2025**



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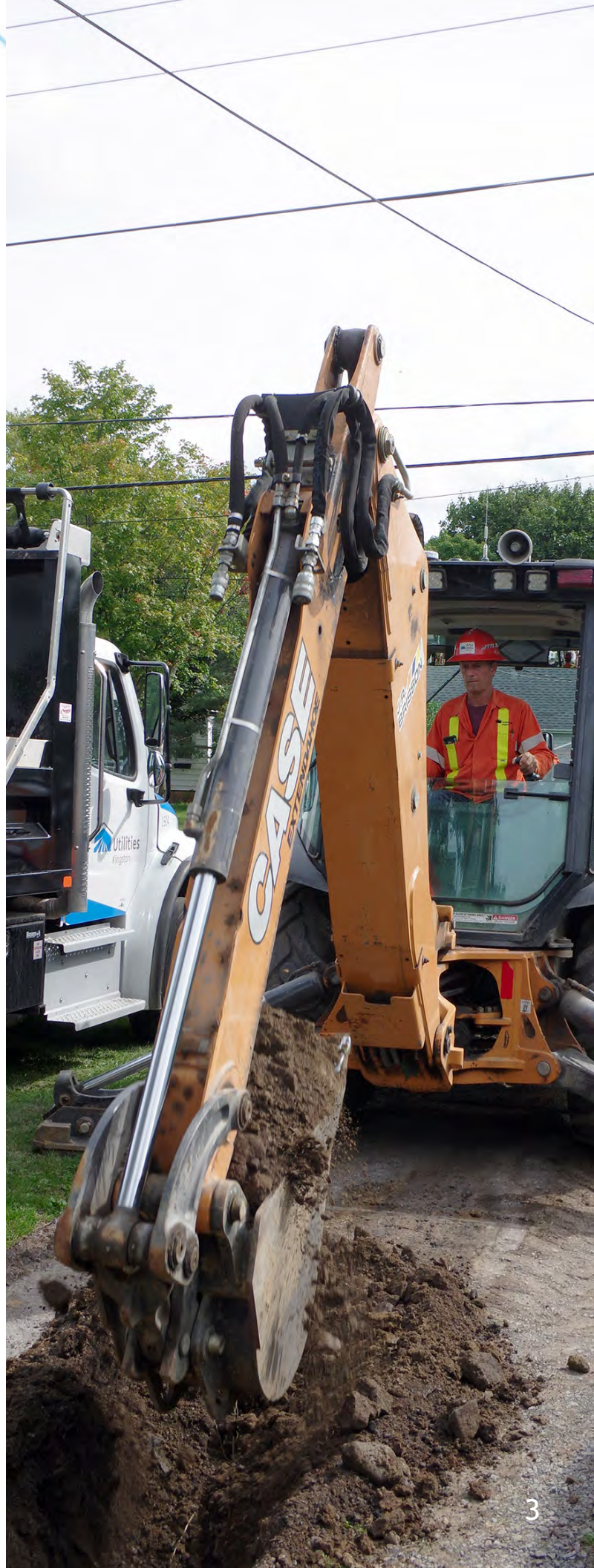
# About Utilities Kingston

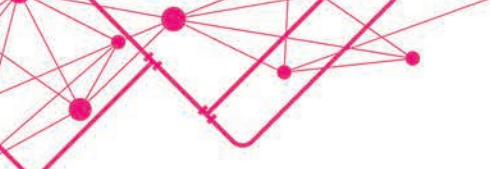
For more than 150 years, Utilities Kingston has proudly provided the Kingston community with safe and reliable utility services.

Over the decades, the company's name and corporate structure have changed, but one thing has remained constant: it is the City-owned utility company accountable to multiple stakeholders, including the City of Kingston, Kingston Hydro, City Council and the residents of the communities in which it operates.

Today, Utilities Kingston is incorporated under the *Ontario Business Corporations Act*. The shareholder is 1425447 Ontario Limited, a wholly owned company of the City of Kingston, represented by City Council. Through its multi-utility model, Utilities Kingston manages water, wastewater, natural gas and appliance rental assets of the City of Kingston and operates and maintains its traffic signal and street lighting infrastructure. In addition, Utilities Kingston manages the electricity assets of Kingston Hydro, while owning and operating a broadband network business, thereby providing economies of scope.

**Appendix A** offers more information about the history and structure of Utilities Kingston.





# About Utilities Kingston

## Board of Directors



**Lanie Hurdle**  
Chair  
Chief Administrative  
Officer, City of Kingston



**James A. Keech**  
President and Chief  
Executive Officer,  
Utilities Kingston



**William Leggett**  
Independent Director,  
Nominated by the  
City of Kingston



**Robert Little**  
Independent Director,  
Nominated by the  
City of Kingston



**Nancy Taylor**  
Independent Director,  
Nominated by the  
City of Kingston





## Mission, vision, values

### Mission:

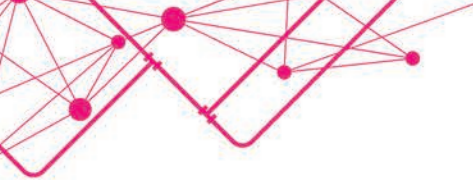
To manage, operate and maintain community infrastructure to deliver safe, reliable services and a personal customer experience.

### Vision:

To advance the unique multi-utility model to benefit our customers and build better communities.

### Values:

Safety, integrity, innovation and reliability.



# Environmental scan

In determining the theme areas, goals and initiatives for Utilities Kingston over the next five years, this plan considers the trends outlined below.

The key drivers for this strategic plan are shaped by both internal and external forces, particularly those related to the global pandemic, organizational changes and increasing concerns for climate change.

## Global pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic is shaping the organization in ways never seen before.

The coronavirus that led to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. The outbreak was declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern in January 2020, and a pandemic in March 2020.

Accordingly, Utilities Kingston proclaimed an updated corporate mission, chiefly to ensure employee and community health and safety, and the continuity of basic utility services. The updated, temporary mission is to “Protect the health and safety of employees and the public, while ensuring the delivery of basic utility services that the community relies on.”

Following this, Utilities Kingston identified trends and opportunities for its business and community.



## Business change

In just a few months' time, the COVID-19 crisis necessitated tremendous change in the way companies in all sectors and regions do business. In particular, the adoption of digital technologies and related customer-facing and internal-facing process improvements will continue to evolve.

## Economic pressures

On the advice of public health officials, jurisdictions across Canada took measures to protect health and safety through physical distancing, temporary restrictions on non-essential businesses and school closures. These measures have a significant impact on the daily lives of Canadians and their families, and have led to job losses and reduced employment income.

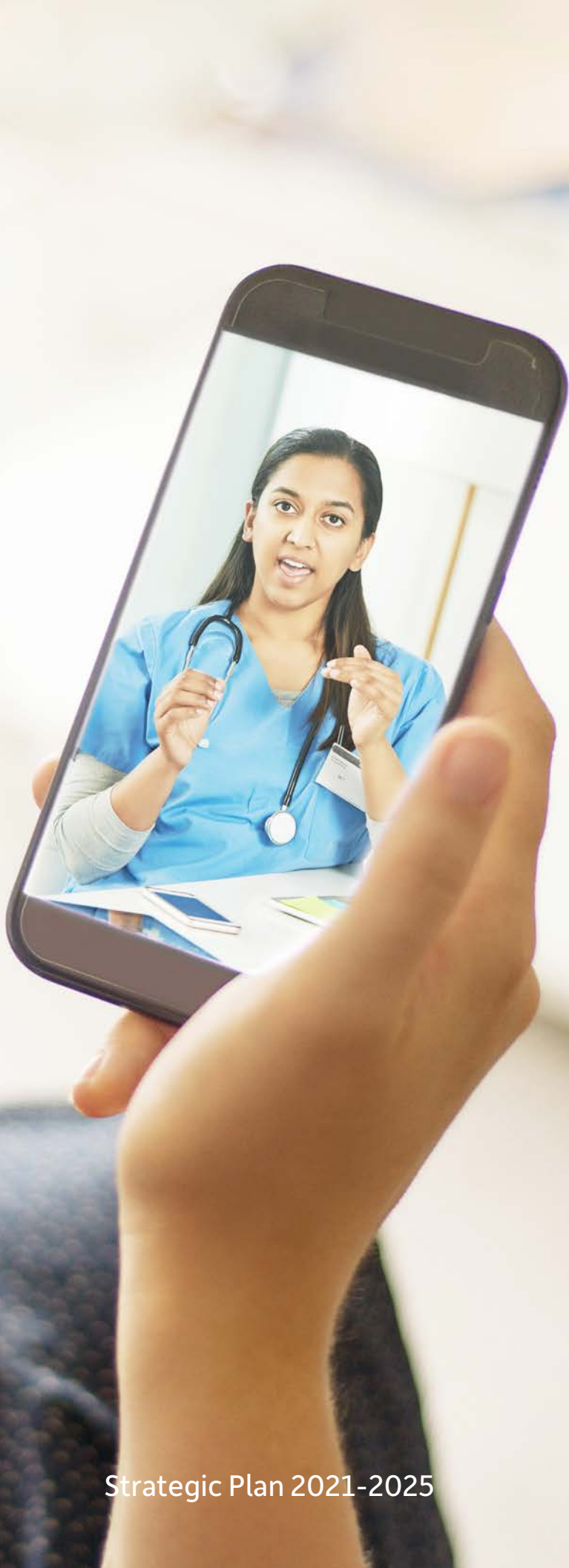
The economic downturn is having a disproportionate impact on some segments of the population. This, coupled with more people working and using increased utilities from home, is resulting in rate pressures for utilities across the province.

The updated, temporary mission is to “Protect the health and safety of employees and the public, while ensuring the delivery of basic utility services that the community relies on.”

Furthermore, utility demand dropped under lockdown, with dramatic reductions in business, services and industry use only partially offset by higher residential use. While this resulted in lost revenue for the company, the economic downturn associated with the pandemic is expected to prolong the period of decreased demand.

## Population growth

The COVID-19 pandemic is influencing where Canadian city-dwellers live. Many people are working from home now and for the foreseeable future. With millions of Canadians no longer regularly commuting to offices, there has been a shift: homeowners in highly populated areas are heading to less-populated regions of the country, providing growth opportunities for municipalities.



## Environmental scan

### Reliance on broadband networking

COVID-19 has put a spotlight on the criticality of internet access. Whether to stay in touch with family and friends, access public services like health care and education, or run a business and work from anywhere, everyone relies on high-speed internet every day. Equitable access to the internet is essential to ensuring the social and economic success of communities across the world, including Kingston.

In 2020, Utilities Kingston, jointly with the City of Kingston, applied to the Improving Connectivity for Ontario program, as well as the Universal Broadband Fund from Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, to fund two residential fibre internet projects in rural areas.

If successful, these projects could mark the utility's first venture into the residential internet market after 20 years of providing broadband services to public sector, commercial and wholesale customers.



## Organizational change

### Shareholder relationship

Recent organizational change at top levels across both organizations has prompted the reaffirmation of both Utilities Kingston and the City of Kingston staff: they are committed to foster and protect this pivotal relationship.

The relationship between Utilities Kingston and its Shareholder, the City of Kingston, is at the heart of the unique multi-utility model. It's resulted in solid asset management practices for Kingston, low costs for utility consumers and superior customer service for the community.

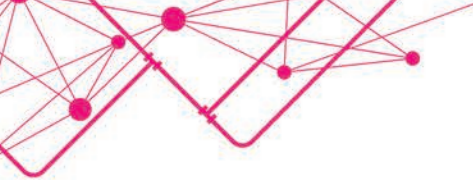
By working together, and sharing an understanding of needs, the organizations are poised to best support community goals. These include the growth, development, and climate change goals of the City of Kingston, and further strengthening the unique, local multi-utility model.

As a key partner for the City, Utilities Kingston also supports municipal economic development goals. By collaborating in new ways, aligning development strategies with post-secondary educational institutions, and bringing together innovation ecosystem and community leaders, Kingston will accelerate a long-term sustainable growth agenda. Utilities Kingston will play an important role in helping to find solutions to enable growth in the municipality.

### President and CEO succession

In 2021, the Utilities Kingston Board of Directors will appoint a new President and CEO for the corporation, as the outgoing CEO, Jim Keech, retires after contributing many effective and productive years of strong leadership in the role.

The transition from one CEO to another is a critical moment in a company's history, that will drive significant corporate change. Furthermore, the climate of unprecedented change due to the COVID-19 pandemic is expected to persist into the foreseeable future. Therefore, this five-year strategic plan will be reviewed by the Utilities Kingston Board of Directors within two years, helping to ensure it remains relevant in these variable times.



# Environmental scan

## Community goals

Utilities Kingston supports the strategic goals of its Shareholder, the City of Kingston, and its customer, Kingston Hydro Corporation.

## City of Kingston strategic priorities

With the help of its community, Council and City staff are focused on creating a smart, livable and leading city. The City's strategic priorities for 2019-2022 include the following:

1. Increase housing affordability
2. Improve walkability
3. Roads and transportation
4. Demonstrate leadership on climate action
5. Strengthen economic development opportunities
6. Foster healthy citizens and vibrant spaces

## Leadership on climate action

### Climate action plan

On March 5, 2019, the City of Kingston became the first Ontario municipality to declare that climate change is an emergency requiring an urgent and strategic response.

The City then set a goal to achieve carbon neutral operations as soon as possible, and no later than 2040.

From its Electric Vehicle Strategy, to reducing urban sprawl and managing organic waste to prevent methane gas and generate clean bio-gas energy, the Kingston community is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Unquestionably, Utilities Kingston shares this goal and remains a committed partner to the City of Kingston in being a climate action leader.

### Infrastructure resilience

Additionally, energy and water systems are increasingly affected by extreme weather events due to climate change. Hence, utility companies around the globe must increase the pace, scale, and scope of efforts to ensure safe and reliable water and energy delivery for the future.

## Kingston Hydro strategic themes

The Kingston Hydro strategic plan for 2019-2024 examines how to drive innovation and find efficiencies for customers, while ensuring reliable power at a fair rate, and increasing value for its community.

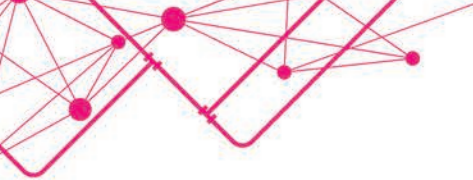


As a modern energy company, how can Kingston Hydro best support community goals for a smart, livable and leading city and stay ahead of changing customer needs?

The four theme areas of its strategic plan include the following:

1. Leverage the multi-utility model for measurable benefits in customer service and cost efficiencies.
2. Deliver the 'power of local hydro' in monitoring and responding to community needs.
3. Ensure reliable infrastructure management.
4. Provide customer service excellence.





# Environmental scan

## Customer factors

### Changing values

Consumer values are changing. Utility customers of the future will demonstrate an increased care for the environment, will want to buy “sustainable” products and services and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and will desire innovative approaches to revenue generation and technology interfaces.

Customers may soon be looking for more flexibility and control of their utility consumption, as they transform their properties into smart homes and choose to produce their own electrical energy.

Utilities Kingston is aware of these rapidly changing customer needs and expectations of their utility. Driven by cost pressures and the desire to reduce utility costs by managing their consumption patterns, customers are evolving from reactive to proactive and highly involved consumers.

### Understanding customer needs

In 2019, 95 per cent of surveyed Utilities Kingston customers said they were satisfied with the electrical services they receive. The company received an ‘A’ on a report card used to grade electricity utilities across the province, consistent with the first two times this survey was conducted in 2014 and 2017.

While the utility participates in this bi-annual, province-wide survey and collects qualitative customer information, it will be important to obtain quantitative data to better understand changing customer needs and expectations.



## Technological factors

In addition to the revolution in broadband networking, as communities increasingly rely on high-speed internet to work, learn, stay connected and receive health care, COVID-19 has accelerated the digital transformation of organizations across the world.

Meanwhile, several important technological themes, including distributed energy resources, are poised to influence the electricity distribution space. The more involved utility consumers of the future will seek information technology to help them better manage utility consumption.

Underpinning technological change is a continued focus on cyber-security practices, especially as malicious cyber-actors look to exploit the ongoing global pandemic.

## Asset management planning

Utilities Kingston is an asset management company. Today, it manages over 100 facilities, serving over 120,000 customers across its multiple utilities. In managing these assets for reliable utility services, Utilities Kingston monitors 25,000 components that need to operate effectively and efficiently across more than 1,000 kilometres of linear assets.

Upper levels of government continue to put emphasis on municipalities to implement sound asset management plans with long-term financial plans, along with full-cost accounting.

Correspondingly, by monitoring and responding to community needs, Utilities Kingston's asset management plans can help create new local economic development opportunities and provide enhanced services for residential, industrial and business customers.

A key concern for Utilities Kingston is capital investment for replacing aging infrastructure and investing in new infrastructure to accommodate growth. The challenge, which spans all business areas, is in finding the right balance between making capital investments and limiting rate increases, while managing reduced funding from other levels of government.

Meanwhile, the utility must adapt plans to help meet the threshold of modern infrastructure, for example as the electricity grid is modernized.



# Environmental scan

## Competitive advantages

### Multi-utility model

Utilities Kingston's strength lies in its highly skilled cross-functional team.

Its employees have a diverse set of skills, knowledge, and talents and enjoy a high level of collaboration between groups. Together, they take pride in supporting a large network of infrastructure in water, wastewater, natural gas, electricity, broadband networking, and streetlights and traffic signals. They also provide a water heater rental business.

Whether it's to restore wind and flood damage, ensure public safety, support the community, improve operating efficiency, or take climate action, the community counts on Utilities Kingston's employees to deliver safely and reliably, every day, and come what may.

### Local control and public accountability

The local multi-utility structure provides the City of Kingston with a unique advantage over other municipalities. Public accountability ensures the continuity of vital services that meet the highest safety standards.

The residents of Kingston benefit from an open, sustainable utility that is committed

to providing its services in the most cost effective, efficient manner possible.

### Guiding principles

Utilities Kingston is responsive to community needs, earning the trust of its stakeholders. Its model is unique in Ontario, providing multiple core utility services under one roof.

During municipal restructuring in 1998, and again during the incorporation of Utilities Kingston in 2000, the following key principles were adopted:

1. Best return/lowest cost to the shareholder
2. Lowest possible rates to customers
3. Best customer service delivery
4. Shared services where possible
5. Maximized coordination for development and infrastructure renewal
6. Rate-based services and full-cost accounting
7. No cross-subsidization between services

These principles resulted in the shared services delivery model that continues to exist today. This model gives Utilities Kingston clear competitive advantages—in cost savings and customer service—over other utility providers in the province.

## Cost savings

Cost savings translate into competitive rates. They are derived from efficiencies through the scope of services provided. An example is the direct cost savings to print and mail one bill for all services received by the customer. In most municipalities, customers receive multiple utility bills.

## Customer service

A clear benefit to Utilities Kingston customers is one contact to receive multiple related services. Examples include:

- One call to arrange for service changes when the customer moves.
- One call and one appointment for locates when the customer is excavating on their property.
- One contact for new construction services, assisting the community in economic development.
- Efficient coordination of joint construction projects, leading to timely and cost-effective completion, with less disruption to customers.





## Broadband networking business

By making high-quality broadband connections available where they otherwise weren't, Utilities Kingston's networking business was established to encourage economic development in Kingston.

Utilities Kingston has access to capable and reliable broadband connectivity all over the city that other companies would be envious of. It is an asset that can be broadened to benefit the company's ratepayers.



# Theme areas and strategic goals

The goals and initiatives set out by Utilities Kingston over the next five years respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and a desire to foster the relationship with its Shareholder, the City of Kingston.

Moreover, the utility company is guided by aspirations to better meet customer expectations, manage assets to benefit the local community, and take climate leadership action.





# Theme areas and strategic goals

## Theme 1: Impact of COVID-19 over the next five years

The COVID-19 pandemic is shaping the organization in ways never seen before.

As people in highly populated areas are expected to head to less-populated regions of the country, this could provide growth opportunities for the municipality of Kingston.

Utilities Kingston is committed to supporting employees, customers, and its Shareholder, as it ensures health and safety, and the reliable delivery of basic utility services.

### Goal 1: Continually revisit the mission.

#### Initiative 1

Monitor the internal and external environment to revise the renewed mission: Protect the health and safety of employees and the public, while ensuring the delivery of basic utility services that the community relies on.

### Goal 2: Support employees in navigating the pandemic.

#### Initiative 1

Monitor information and changes provided by public health agencies, the provincial and federal governments and regulating bodies, to comply with guidelines, orders, and regulations.

#### Initiative 2

In remaining sensitive to the impacts of COVID-19 on employees, provide and promote supports for mental health and wellness, and tools to prevent the spread of infection. Inform and reassure employees through proactive communications.

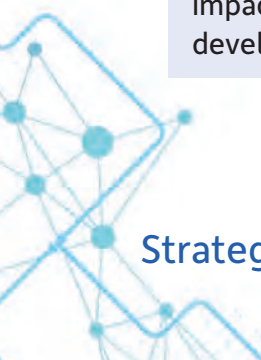
### Goal 3: Assess opportunities in a post-pandemic world.

#### Initiative 1

In partnership with City of Kingston's Community Services and Business, and Environment and Projects departments, monitor market and land development trends. Assess the opportunities and impacts to utility services, and how Utilities Kingston can facilitate development opportunities for the municipality.

#### Initiative 2

Investigate emerging customer needs to develop new, innovative utility services.



## Theme 2: The pivotal relationship with the City of Kingston

The relationship between Utilities Kingston and its Shareholder, the City of Kingston, is at the heart of the unique multi-utility model. It's resulted in solid asset management practices for Kingston, low costs for utility consumers and superior customer service for the community.

By working together, and sharing an understanding of needs, the organizations are poised to best support community goals. These include the growth, development, and climate change goals of the City of Kingston, and further strengthening the unique, local multi-utility model.

During the five years of this strategic plan, as the senior leadership of Utilities Kingston changes significantly, and Shareholder representation changes due to a municipal election, the organizations remain committed to foster and protect this pivotal relationship.

### Goal 1: Increase and enhance reporting to the Boards and Shareholder.

#### Initiative 1

Develop key success metrics for the organization, including measures associated with the benefits of the multi-utility model. Prepare recommendations for the Utilities Kingston and Kingston Hydro Board of Directors.

#### Initiative 2

Determine the appropriate information to report to the Shareholder and implement enhanced reporting for the Annual General Meetings of the Shareholder, in addition to required reporting to City Council.

### Goal 2: Foster working relationships with City of Kingston staff and improve mutual accountability.

#### Initiative 1

Propose a partnership working group with the City of Kingston to identify, communicate and act on strategic priorities of both corporations, to ensure both parties are working together to action key initiatives, including those that enhance the multi-utility model.

#### Initiative 2

Utilities Kingston staff will identify associates at the City of Kingston (e.g., the City's Chief Administrative Officer and Utilities Kingston's Chief Executive Officer) and establish regular communications and actions regarding joint issues and initiatives.

#### Initiative 3

Increase representation at City leadership events, to better understand and support critical municipal initiatives.



# Theme areas and strategic goals

## Theme 3: Networking business

COVID-19 has put a spotlight on the criticality of internet access. Whether to stay in touch with family and friends, access public services like health care and education, or run a business and work from anywhere, everyone relies on high-speed internet every day. Meanwhile, equitable access to the internet is essential to ensuring the social and economic success of communities across the world, including Kingston.

### Goal 1: Develop a five-year business plan.

#### Initiative 1

Update the market demand study.

#### Initiative 2

Define customer and community needs to be met by the business.

#### Initiative 3

Develop a five-year business plan for the broadband networking business.

### Goal 2: Develop a connected community plan.

#### Initiative 1

Working with the City of Kingston and other partners, develop a plan for addressing gaps in broadband access and performance, in Kingston and the surrounding area.



## Theme 4: Meeting customer expectations

Consumer values are changing. Utility customers of the future will demonstrate increased care for the environment, will want to buy “sustainable” products and services and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and will desire innovative approaches to revenue generation, technology interfaces and rate mitigation.

### Goal 1: Develop a customer experience strategy.

#### Initiative 1

Develop a plan for customer engagement, to better understand customer needs and expectations.

#### Initiative 2

Through customer engagement, identify and define customer experience indicators.

#### Initiative 3

Develop and begin executing a plan to improve customer experience over five years.





# Theme areas and strategic goals

## Theme 5: Asset management

By monitoring and responding to community needs, Utilities Kingston’s asset management plans can help create new local economic development opportunities and provide enhanced services for residential, industrial, and business customers.

### Goal 1: Manage assets for sustainability.

#### Initiative 1

Continue with a long-term capital infrastructure plan. The plan should balance asset renewal strategies with growth-related asset expansion. It should meet the infrastructure needs of new commercial and residential investors, while ensuring continued reliability for existing customers.

#### Initiative 2

Review and evaluate the construction and contract management methodologies implemented at Cataraqui Bay Wastewater Treatment Plant, with the intent to adopt these practices in managing future facility asset renewal or replacement projects.

#### Initiative 3

Investigate new and innovative ways to understand asset condition, replace or rehabilitate infrastructure assets and apply pilot applications.

### Goal 2: Manage assets for climate action.

#### Initiative 1

Review and report on the implications of greenhouse gas reduction planning, within the natural gas and electricity service areas.

#### Initiative 2

For facility renewal or replacement, ensure that:

- clean energy benchmarks and standards form part of the strategy.
- all projects consider the goal of reducing the total energy footprint of the facility.



## Goal 3: Manage assets for a smart utility.

### Initiative 1

Plan and implement proactive capital asset replacement programs in facility upgrades.

### Initiative 2

Inventory technology communicating with existing assets, to develop a long-term plan for capable, reliable, and secure communications.

### Initiative 3

Plan and prioritize the application of real-time data collection technologies to infrastructure, to support data-driven decision making.





# Theme areas and strategic goals

## Theme 6: Climate action leadership

Utilities Kingston shares the City of Kingston’s goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and remains its committed partner in being a climate action leader.

Conversely, energy and water systems are increasingly affected by extreme weather events due to climate change. Hence, utility companies around the globe must increase the pace, scale, and scope of efforts to ensure safe and reliable water and energy delivery for the future.

### Goal 1: Demonstrate and embed climate actions into operations.

#### Initiative 1

Support the City of Kingston’s climate action strategies:

- Investigate infrastructure needs for active transportation and to support more electric vehicles in the City of Kingston and Utilities Kingston fleet.
- Support the Home Energy Retrofit Program and Green Standard Community Improvement Plan.
- Gain knowledge on, and support ‘net zero’ policies and developments.

#### Initiative 2

At replacement and when feasible, replace fossil-fuel-dependent vehicles and equipment with electric or hybrid models. Ensure electric and hybrid models are considered for new fleet vehicles.

#### Initiative 3

Investigate the affordability of establishing a Climate Action Leadership Reserve Fund, to recommend during the next budget cycle.

#### Initiative 4


Develop and obtain approval of a Utilities Kingston Climate Action Leadership Plan by the end of 2025. This plan will identify the financial resources required in the 2027-2030 capital budget to achieve carbon neutral operations by 2040.

#### Initiative 5

Leverage available energy analytics and undertake energy retrofitting in the systems and facilities that Utilities Kingston operates, to save energy and reduce operating costs.







**Goal 2:** Investigate an integrated biosolids and source-separated organics processing facility.

**Initiative 1**

Complete the balance of the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment that considers the preferred system selected as part of the [Master Plan for Enhanced Biosolids Management & Biogas Utilization](#). Finalize investigation, select a preferred business model (including procurement and operations models) and seek required approvals.





# Appendix A: History and structure of Utilities Kingston

## Overview

Utilities Kingston has provided the residents of Kingston with safe and reliable utility services for more than 100 years. Over the years, the company name and corporate structure have changed, but one thing has remained constant: it is the City-owned utility company accountable to the City of Kingston, City Council and the residents of the local community.

Prior to municipal restructuring on January 1, 1998, the utility services were provided by several different groups:

- Water and wastewater by the former townships
- Wastewater services by the former City government
- Water, natural gas and electricity services in the former City by the Public Utilities Commission (PUC)

As a result of municipal restructuring, all of these services were brought together under one organization, now known as Utilities Kingston.

## Connecting information technology users

During the same period, Utilities Kingston began building a broadband network in

order to link information technology users in Kingston with others from around the world, thereby creating a landscape that positions Kingston to prosper in the broadband economy. Through this local broadband network, individuals, small businesses, institutions and local government gain access to worldwide information resources and a broad range of tools to connect both globally and locally.

Today, the local network spans over 1,000 route kilometres of fibre optic cable. Additional coverage is provided through a licensed fixed wireless system with services in Napanee and Brockville, and a dedicated fibre link to Ottawa. Together these network elements provide coverage connecting hundreds of institutional and commercial buildings throughout Frontenac County, County of Lennox & Addington, and the 1000 Islands. From Kingston, users interconnect to third-party broadband providers across Ontario and every national service provider in Canada.

This local network was instrumental to Kingston being chosen as one of the world's 21 "smart communities" in 2012 by the Intelligent Community Forum and supports the community's vision to become *Canada's Most Sustainable City*.

## Changes to the electricity distribution industry

The introduction of the *Energy Competition Act* in June of 1998 initiated significant changes to electric utilities in the Province of Ontario. One of these was the establishment of corporate structures for the ongoing management and operation of electricity distribution systems—a requirement that would create a level playing field between privately-owned utilities and those that were retained by their municipalities.

Legislation was prescriptive in the way these corporations were to be set up. In particular, municipalities could not continue to distribute electricity, except through a corporation. In addition, employees within a municipally-held electricity distribution corporation could not be significantly involved in any other activities except electricity distribution.

This created challenges for the municipal department that operated four utility systems. The City of Kingston, as owner, determined it would benefit the municipality to maintain the multi-utility structure.

The organization needed a structure that would meet the intent of the legislation, maintain the advantages realized through utility convergence or integration (one call, one crew and one bill) and support the municipality through sharing services such as finance, where beneficial to both parties.





# Appendix A: History and structure of Utilities Kingston

## An innovative solution

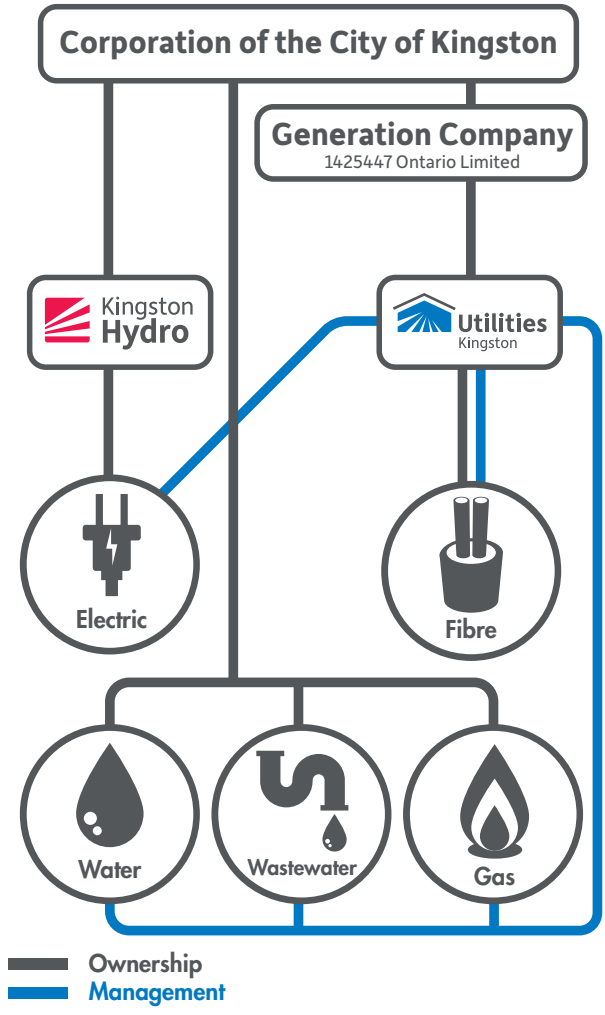
The proposed solution, which became the current structure (Figure 1), saw the incorporation of three Ontario Business Corporations. The first, Kingston Hydro Corporation, holds the assets of the former Hydro Electric Commission. The second, 1425447 Ontario Limited that was formed as a generating company, owns the third, 1425445 Ontario Limited (operating as Utilities Kingston). The latter is home to all the employees of the former municipal department and owns the assets of the broadband networking business.

Through this structure, which is unique in Ontario, Utilities Kingston manages, operates and maintains the assets of the City’s water, wastewater, gas and electric utilities.

## Structure

Utilities Kingston is a for-profit business corporation, incorporated under the *Ontario Business Corporations Act*. The shareholder is the City of Kingston, represented by the Council of the City of Kingston.

To leverage economies of scope, Utilities Kingston manages the water, wastewater and gas assets of the City of Kingston, and the electric assets of Kingston Hydro.







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