We, as County Council, staff and engaged communities, have taken up the challenge to focus our vision and show leadership to meet the challenges before us through strategic planning and policy review.

I’d like to take a few minutes to talk about the accomplishments of Grey County in 2013

1. Corporate Strategic Plan – The plan provides focus on Grey County’s long-term goals and is our guide in setting priorities, making service delivery decisions, and providing the foundation for additional plans, strategies, and actions.

2. Corporate Operating Plan – Our three-year Corporate Operating Plan clearly lays out the work that needs to be done, department by department, to implement the strategic plan goals. Quarterly reporting keeps staff and council up-to-date on our successes and our challenges.

3. Economic Development – A major priority of County Council – Grey County has an economic development and local foods staff who work with other economic development resources at the local, regional and provincial levels to support the sustainability and growth of our local business and agricultural community. We are pursuing the intelligent community framework. Grey County has shown leadership in the Western Ontario Wardens’ Caucus ultra-high-speed broadband project as well as the South West Economic Alliance which advocates for economic development and sustainability.

4. Joint services review – Our first proposal is in the works.

5. Affordable Housing – We are delivering programs through housing that are helping new home buyers and helping home owners remain in their homes. Our staff is developing strategies to implement the strategies of our housing plan over the next few years. Seeking funding opportunities to implement them successfully continues to be a challenge.

6. Transportation – Our comprehensive Transportation Master Plan process is well under way. That process highlights key challenges and opportunities which this and future councils must use to develop strategies to provide the right transportation
services and infrastructure within a sustainable funding model. There is a lot of work to do; we cannot put off making long-term strategies to address the challenges.

7. Organizational Review – The transportation review is producing recommendations for Council to consider and implement. Work with our collective bargaining units and refocusing on our priorities is moving towards a framework for a more effective and responsive County work force. The housing review has provided recommendations which will improve an already effective organization.

8. Governance – Our task force ended its work on Council’s recommendation with some minor changes. Issues such as road and bridge rationalization will keep bringing the questions of governance models back to Council in the near future.

9. Long Term Care – The task force is moving toward recommendations on how Grey County will continue to provide long-term care. It is an ongoing challenge to try to engage The Minister of Health and the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) in working towards a sustainable and realistic model for long-term care here in Grey County.

10. Space Needs Study – We are reviewing the options to meet our needs into the future.

11. Emergency Medical Services – Council’s decision on non-emergency transfers has phased in a realignment of resources to address service delivery needs across the county.

12. Grey Roots – This facility and its great staff and volunteers provides more to our community each year with its great exhibits, activities and educational engagement of our young people.

13. Tourism – We are meeting the goals of our tourist plan. We have engaged in helping RTO7 define its role in regional tourism. We are working with many partners to boost tourism in our region.

14. Day to day services — Information Technology, Transportation, Emergency Medical Services, Land Use Planning, Community Development, Tourism, Heritage, a broad range of Social Services including Long-Term Care, Social Housing, Ontario Works and Public Health. POA Courts, General Administration, Finance, and the Clerk’s department have all done their part this year providing those day-to-day services improving and supporting the lives of our people, supporting our economy, preserving our environment, and running our organization.

15. Aboriginal Neighbours – We will continue to build our relationship with our Aboriginal neighbours within and around Grey County.
16. Supporting the Warden outside of Grey – thanks for your support – it has been a privilege to be Western Ontario Wardens’ Caucus chair, leading their efforts in the ultra-high-speed broadband project, in working to engage the Province in meaningful discussions on a sustainable model for long-term care in western Ontario, and engaging the Province on a range of current issues of importance to western Ontario. It has been an education to represent WOWC on the Board of AMO – this has been a valuable insight into the work this group does in policy consultation and advocacy to the provincial government. It has also been a privilege to be engaged as a director of the Ontario Good Roads Association in their work to provide education and advocacy in the interest of our transportation networks, and a benefit to have easy access to OGRA technical and policy resources.

Grey County Council and our staff have met many challenges, made important decisions, and carried them out during 2013. We can be proud of what we have done, realizing that there are many challenges ahead of us in the future.

I would like to thank Grey County Council for the support they have given me as Warden during the past year.

I would also like to thank the Warden’s Committee for their advice and support.

I would like to thank the staff of Grey County for their great work during this past year.

And I would like to thank the engaged citizens of Grey County for their participation in their County government as stakeholders’ participation in studies, as volunteers serving County services, as participants in public processes and as just good citizens who took the time to pick up the phone or send an email to share their thoughts on events or decisions at Grey County.

Duncan