



Just Doing It | The Paradise Way

Continuing to Improve in the Face of Adversity



Introducing the Town of Paradise

Paradise is a town on the Avalon Peninsula in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. With a population of approximately 21,000, the Town is one of Atlantic Canada's fastest-growing municipalities with the youngest average-aged population in Newfoundland and Labrador.





With a goal of providing a “Paradise for everyone”, Council and staff at the Town of Paradise work hard to provide the necessary municipal services, programs, and activities for all residents. Operations are organized into four departments and the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer. Together these departments oversee all services, programs and activities offered by the Town:

- ✓ **Administrative Offices**
- ✓ **Corporate Services**
- ✓ **Infrastructure and Public Works**
- ✓ **Planning and Protective Services**
- ✓ **Recreation and Community Services**

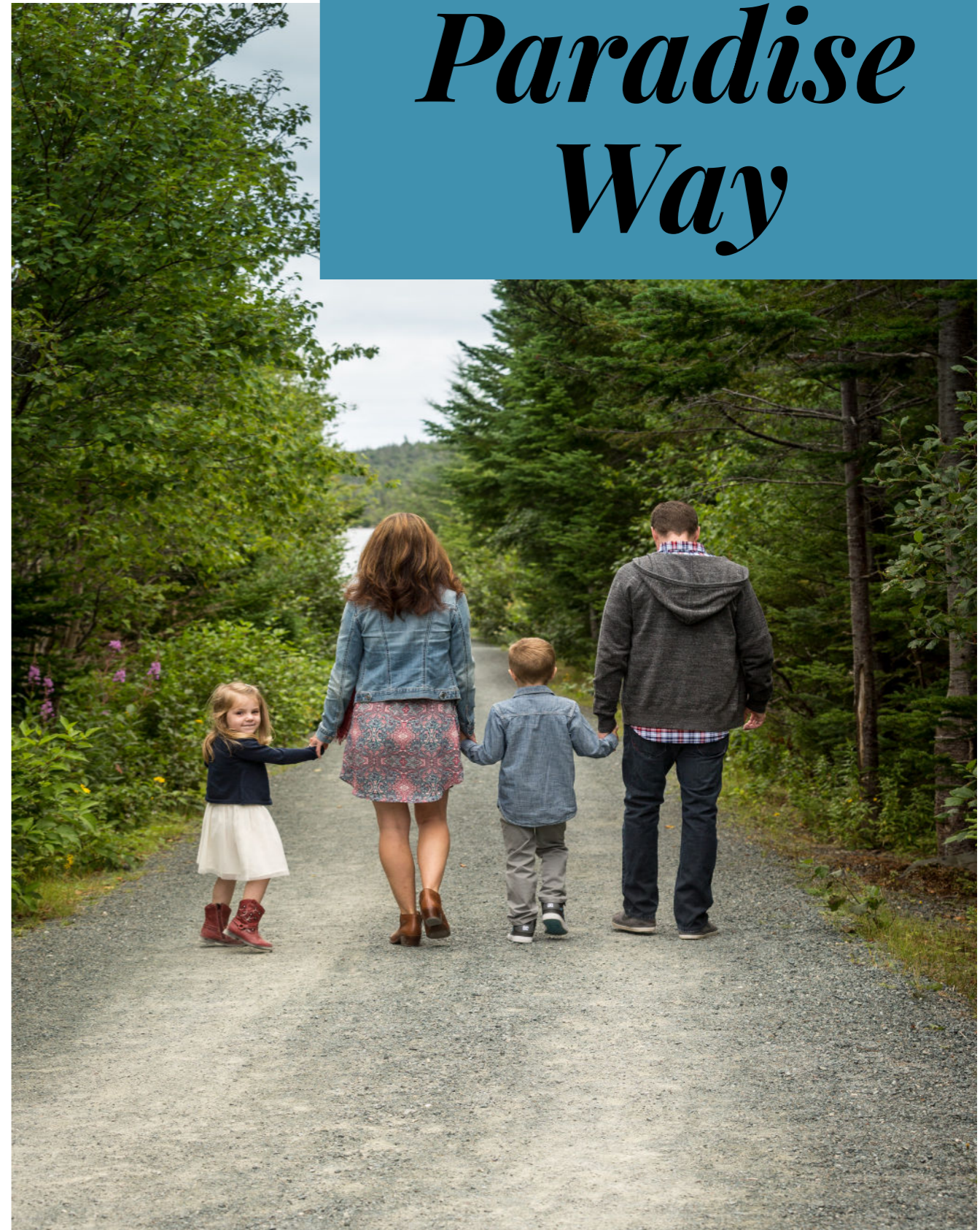
Establishing a Continuous Improvement Culture

The Town engaged Leading Edge Group in 2019 to help grow a culture of ongoing continuous improvement where management and staff are upskilled and empowered to make positive changes and improve processes and services for the benefit of all residents.

In this regard, Leading Edge Group has supported the Town through developing:

-  Awareness of Lean and its relevance through *White Belt* certified training;
-  Basic proficiency among staff members to apply Lean through *Yellow Belt* certified training;
-  Capabilities among managers to execute cross-functional improvements through *Green Belt* certified training; and
-  Skills and behaviors among the senior leadership team to effectively support and sponsor staff and management across all improvement initiatives.

The Paradise Way





Action-oriented and Results-driven

Capability building and execution have been aligned with the key strategic priorities of the Town. Over 50 staff members (including management) have received training and coaching in Lean and, in less than one year, progress and results have been outstanding.

Grass Roots Improvements

Armed with skills gained through White and Yellow Belt training, staff members have been empowered to make small positive changes (Just Do Its) across the organization in all departments and areas.

Cross-functional Improvements

To gain Green Belt certification, managers at the Town had to complete an improvement project as well as passing a final exam.

Through the following successful Green Belt projects, the team has already realized benefits for the Town and its residents.



Accommodation Tax Retrieval

Developed new standards of accuracy in revenue collection; reduced the defect rate from 11 defects, that represented approximately \$100,000 in lost revenue from 2018 to 2020, down to 0.

Savings of \$131,000.



Emergency Response

Reduced emergency response preparation time from four (4) hours to three (3) hours and improved administrative tasks, purchasing practices and stock control of yard equipment.

Savings of \$73,111.



Accounts Payable (AP) Invoice Payment Process

Established and communicated payment terms to vendors; reduced the percentage of invoices paid outside established terms and increased the percentage of vendor payments processed electronically.

Non-value-added activities have been reduced allowing employees more time to complete other Town initiatives; and relationships between the Town and key stakeholders have improved as it ensures the highest level of service is always being delivered.



Rental Process for Recreation Facilities

Standardized the rental procedure to reflect reduction in approval wait time.

Maintaining Continuity in the Face of Crisis

Since the beginning of 2020, the province of Newfoundland has been hit with two major crises – a massive snowstorm in January and the COVID-19 global pandemic in March. Each crisis on its own would present major challenges for any organization – particularly a public service entity. To be faced with two – one of which is a global public health pandemic – in the space of two months is almost incomprehensible. However, thanks to the Lean training and support received from Leading Edge Group, staff and management at the Town had the skills and mindset to embrace this challenge and successfully maintain continuity, while innovating and improving processes and services throughout.

In the face of the problems presented by both crises, the Town quickly shifted its focus so that staff could execute “Just Do Its” across the organization and make the necessary changes to serve its residents in the best possible way. Supported by management and Council, over 30 changes were made across all departments and divisions including:

Just Do It Improvements

- Establishing an effective process for electronic rather than physical signatures;
- Offering interac e-Transfers to customers and suppliers as a method of contactless payment;
- Developing a process to receive planning applications and send permits by email;
- Establishing a recreation release and refund practice;
- Developing a new detailed daily staff work assignment form;
- Establishing electronic distribution of incoming non-confidential mail; and
- Establishing a fast turnaround for revising all policies for compliance with new provincial protocols.

If someone had told me at the beginning of January 2020 that the management team at the Town of Paradise was about to be tested beyond all extraordinary measures, not in my wildest dreams could I have envisioned what lay ahead. The first test arrived in January in the form of a major snowstorm dubbed "Snowmageddon" causing the Mayor to call a State of Emergency and then COVID-19 arrived in March causing a provincial medical emergency and eventually the worldwide pandemic.

The Paradise team not only rose to the occasion - they soared. All of the Town's managers are trained in Lean Green Belts, the directors are trained sponsors of the program, and many of our staff have received White and Yellow Belt training. Having so many of our employees all versed in the same continuous improvement school of thought heavily contributed to the Town's success through unprecedented times. Essential and core services continued under the leadership of the Town's Green Belts and, as Provincial COVID-19 Alert Response Levels were changing, our team was nimble and pivoted their deliveries in such a way that many of the changes made will be now permanent as Paradise returns to a new normal.

Lisa Niblock, Chief Administrative Officer



With the COVID-19 pandemic, the world has seen a significant change in the way we live and work. I strongly believe that the training I received from Leading Edge Group helped me tremendously during this time.

In 2019, I completed Lean Green Belt certification. During the course of our project, I learned about and used Lean tools that I had no idea of prior to the training; concepts such as JDIs (Just Do Its), CSM (current state map), Gemba Walks and 5S. These tools became essential in helping me adapt our work to respond to the current pandemic. Using these tools and the Lean concepts, the IPW department continued to work and provide essential services to residents with little to no interruptions.

The training completed for the Lean Green Belt certification has given me greater confidence in tougher decision-making; enabled me to take on greater responsibilities and be more organized in my work. Overall, my work and the work of the Infrastructure and Public Works Department have improved because of the changes that were made.

**Nelson Whalen, Manager of Operations & Public Works,
Department of Infrastructure and Public Works**



In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, like many other municipalities, the Town of Paradise had to take measures to support public health advice to proactively help prevent the spread of the virus. All Town facilities closed to the public on extremely short notice. To say transitioning to working remotely and having to find new ways to provide core financial services to residents and businesses was challenging is an understatement. However, using the training acquired through the Lean Green Belt for Municipalities program, the transition to the Town's ever changing 'new normal' went more smoothly.

The program focused on helping the Town develop a framework for continuous process improvements and provided training on how to achieve such. It provided us with the knowledge and the tools required to help us identify and resolve issues in a timely manner during such unprecedented times. Having an understanding of Lean concepts allowed the Finance division to develop and offer new solutions that enabled us to provide the same quality of service that customers and vendors have come to expect. For example, residents are now able to request tax certificates and permits remotely; pay applicable fees electronically and receive copies of requested documents via email, all within a timely manner. The plan is to continue using these new processes when we reopen our Town facilities to the public. The Town has already experienced the benefits of Lean training and I am confident that we will continue to experience more as improvements are made to other processes in the future.

**Cathy Broydell, CPA, CMA, Manager of Finance,
Department of Corporate Services**



Continuing the Journey

Prior to the challenges of 2020, the Town committed to continuing and expanding its continuous improvement journey with a focus on embedding strategy, coaching, and managing and progressing existing capabilities to achieve further, widespread improvements.

With Leading Edge Group's guidance and support, "Just Do It" improvements are continuing; while Yellow Belt graduates are working on medium-sized improvement projects mentored by the Town's Green Belts. These projects will focus on:

- 🔄 Developing staff procedures for resource planning for special events;
- 🧹 Standardizing cleaning of recreation equipment;
- 🍏 Implementing food procurement policy for Committee meetings;
- 📄 Standardizing permit pick-up and payment procedures;
- 📄 Standardizing expense reporting;
- 🖥️ Improving accessibility of As Built drawing software;
- 🌐 Standardizing IT requests;
- ✂️ Developing a hydrant preventative maintenance program; and
- ⚠️ Standardizing municipal enforcement issues and actions.

While the crises may have shifted emphasis, they certainly have not dented the Town's progress and commitment to continuous improvement. The commitment hasn't wavered. In fact, it is stronger than ever.

In effect, given what the organization has been able to achieve in 2020, it can justifiably believe that anything is possible!

As a leader, I feel the Paradise team was equipped with the know how to 'Just Do It' and get the work done during the challenges of 2020. Was it easy? No. Did it make for some long days? Yes. Would we choose to do it all again? Probably not! However, the team's ability to make efficient, well-planned process changes, and communicate with each other, staff, council, and, most importantly, our customers – the residents – was tremendously increased due to the culture of continuous improvement we work to instill at the Town of Paradise.

Lisa Niblock, Chief Administrative Officer



Leading Edge Group helps Canadian municipalities to achieve operational excellence and increased quality of services through tailored training and consultancy programs, delivered by Lean for Municipality experts.

Our programs provide options to suit municipality staff at all levels across all functions of the organization.

Get in touch

John Whelton | Program Director

☎ (416) 637 5074

✉ JWhelton@leadingedgegroup.com

🌐 www.leadingedgegroup.com

🏠 60 St. Clair Avenue East,
Suite 805, Toronto,
ON, M4T 1N5, Canada

