



November 17, 2022

County of Brant

Sent via email: clerks@brant.ca

To Whom it may concern:

Please be advised that Brantford City Council at its meeting held November 15, 2022 adopted the following:

Resolution Receiving Mayor's Inaugural Address

- A. THAT the Inaugural Address of His Worship Mayor Kevin Davis BE RECEIVED; and
- B. THAT the congratulations of this Council BE EXPRESSED to Mayor Davis for his thoughtful and carefully prepared Address; and
- C. THAT the Mayor's Inaugural Address BE FORWARDED to all Department Heads of the City administration, the Mayor and Council of the County of Brant, the Chief and Council of Six Nations of the Grand River, the Chief and Council of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, the Brantford-Brant Member of Parliament, the Brantford-Brant Member of Provincial Parliament, to all City Boards and Advisory Committees and posted on the City's website.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours truly,

Chris Gauthier
City Clerk, cgauthier@brantford.ca

cc Six Nations of the Grand River
Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation
Brantford-Brant Member of Parliament
Brantford-Brant Member of Provincial Parliament



Inaugural Mayoral Address

November 15, 2022

Good evening and welcome to the Inaugural meeting of the 2022-2026 Brantford City Council.

I also want to welcome you to the first City Council inaugural meeting in our new city hall. The fact we're meeting here tonight – and in person – is one sign of how much has changed in the last four years.

During the last term of council, our number one job was keeping the city safe as we dealt with the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic took a heavy toll on individuals, families, the health care system, businesses, and the community as a whole. I'm proud of city staff for the way they rallied to the challenge. No matter what was put in front of them, their first thought was "how do we make this work?". Our city administration became a more focused and adaptable organization as staff worked together to meet common objectives. They readily created innovative solutions to problems that might not have been considered in earlier times. I'm sure that we can maintain that same spirit, and nimbleness as we address new and emerging issues.

Despite the challenges thrown at us by the pandemic, we made progress on some of the city's most pressing problems, from homelessness to traffic and from climate change to healthcare. That's a tribute to the dedication of the members of this council and city employees. During the last four years we laid the foundation for a city that will be safer, healthier, greener, and more prosperous.

I'm going to talk about some of the challenges that will face us during the next term of Council, but before I do that, I want to say a few "thank you's".

On behalf of myself, and all the members of council, I want to say thank you to our family members and friends for their support. Being on council is a demanding job and none of us would be 100 per cent effective without the help of those closest to us. In particular, I want to thank my wife Lisa, my daughters Brittany, Melanie and Katie and their families for their ongoing love and support. I also want to thank the dedicated group of campaign volunteers, some of whom are with us tonight. It would have been impossible to run an effective campaign without their help, guidance, and assistance.

I also want to say a few words about the retiring members of council: Jan Vanderstelt, John Utley, Cheryl Antoski and Joshua Wall. I'm sorry to see them go, but they do so with the thanks of our city for their tireless service. Brantford is a better place because they cared. Thank you.

I also want to welcome the four new members of council: Michael Sullivan, Gino Caputo, Linda Hunt, and Mandy Samwell. Our council will be reinvigorated by their presence. They will bring new ideas and a new spark to council that will help us reach our shared goals, and perhaps find new and innovative ways to do so.

It's worth noting for the record that we now have three women on council; the first time that has happened. It's one more step towards a council that better reflects the diversity of our community.

Each member of council – new or returning – comes to council with ideas about how to improve our community. It's important that we work together to craft a common vision of council's goals for the next term. It helps to keep us focused but, perhaps more importantly, it gives our staff clarity about the things they should focus on. I'm proposing that council meet in the new year to discuss our ideas on what we want for the next four years and develop a list of common goals and priorities that will guide the city into the future.

All of us just spent many long hours knocking on doors, talking to residents about the things that trouble them as well as their hopes for the city. We all heard about the troubling issues of homelessness, substance abuse, mental health, and crime, particularly downtown. These are not simple issues to deal with. And they are not just Brantford issues. Cities across the country – and around the world – are dealing with the same problems.

During the last term of council, we started several programs designed to deal with these issues and, more importantly, to help those who need it the most.

We have reinvigorated the Community Drug Strategy. The Brantford Downtown Outreach Team is helping the homeless to find shelter and those who abuse substances to get help.

We now have a residential detox program and the Police Service Mobile Crisis Rapid Response Team pairs police officers and mental health specialists to respond to 911 calls.

We've tackled safety concerns by funding a downtown police beat patrol 24/7. We've added eight special constables to help. We have also put in place a mobile private security patrol to better monitor and control activities on city owned properties.

An important piece of the puzzle is having more affordable housing. During the last term we worked with the County of Brant to develop a program to build more than 500 new rent-geared-to-income affordable housing units over the next 10 years.

There are visible signs of progress! A transitional housing project on Marlene Avenue gives formerly homeless people a place to live and the help they need to become self-reliant. A new development on Colborne Street West is weeks away from being completed.

Next year we hope to begin work on the next affordable housing project, Trillium Way in Paris followed by a family focused development in the downtown using the Lucy Marco student residence building the city just purchased from Laurier Brantford. That will be followed by a large housing development on Shellard Lane.

Prevention is important too. We intend to expand programming in our community centres targeted at helping teens become more adaptable, stronger, and more resilient so they aren't tempted to use drugs.

For all that we are doing, there is more we can do. We must be creative and compassionate in developing solutions that work.

Downtown

I've worked downtown for more than 40 years, and I've been quite concerned about the deterioration we've seen in recent years. During the last term, council made a lot of progress to restore the downtown to its rightful place as the heart of our city.

We set up a Downtown Task Force about 18 months ago to give us a roadmap to a better downtown.

We made a lot of progress in the last term. I've already discussed some of the steps we've taken downtown to make it safer and to help those who need it.

We're making the downtown more vital. Now that Covid-19 has ebbed, we've seen a return to community events in Harmony Square: concerts, movies, flag raising, roller-skating and more. The Sanderson Centre is now back to a full program, and Laurier is running more events for students in the core.

As we continue with those efforts, we are moving ahead with plans to get more people living in the downtown. New apartment buildings are already planned, with more than 2000 anticipated units already approved, many of them in the greater downtown area.

In this term of council, we will begin work on a \$25 million project to upgrade underground services to support buildings in the downtown that are eight or 10 stories tall or more, providing homes to thousands of people in our City core.

Housing

The soaring cost of housing is a concern shared by most people in the city. Young families worry if they'll ever get their own place. Their parents want to help but don't always have the resources.

Brantford is particularly attractive place to live, however, the supply of housing units is not meeting the demand. When that happens, purchase prices and rents go up.

We need tens of thousands of new housing units to keep up with the growth we face, being part of one of the fastest growing regions in North America. If we build enough units, we may be able to bend the curve on rents and housing prices.

Infilling – building new housing units on serviced land inside the current city – is cost effective, faster, and often involves repurposing vacant and derelict lands. There are thousands of units in the pipeline and, fortunately, a lot of them are rental units due, in part, to the City offering tax incentives to spur new rental construction.

Expansion Lands

A big part of our future is the Expansion Lands, the area north of Powerline Road that the city annexed from Brant County. Someday it will be home to 40,000 people and the location of about 20,000 jobs. A lot of the groundwork for development in this area was accomplished in the last term of council.

In the next term, the city will begin installing the sewer and water lines to develop this area. The landowners are working with city staff to plan the new neighborhoods and we will soon see where the roads, homes, businesses parks and other facilities will be located.

By the end of this term, I am confident we'll see shovels in the ground and new buildings rising.

Transportation

As the city has grown, so have our traffic problems, particularly in the city centre.

People trying to get from West Brant to work or shop east of the Grand River run into bottlenecks at the Lorne Bridge, Brant Ave and at the Colborne-Clarence-Dalhousie intersections, and it's only going to get worse.

During the last term, we made some tough decisions about the future of our road network. Plans that were drafted decades ago for the BSAR and the Oak Park Road Extension were explored and ultimately eliminated as they are no longer suitable.

Now, we know what the community would prefer us not to do. The challenge for the new council is to figure out what we ARE going to do. It will take a focused effort on our part to find the solutions, and it will also mean working with our neighbours – especially the County of Brant – to develop a regional transportation plan that addresses traffic issues in both communities.

Transit

All this growth also means we should take a fresh look at our transit system. Riders are frustrated that it can take an hour to get from one side of the city to another. The coming growth in the Expansion Lands will only make the problem worse.

We need to consider developing a secondary transit transfer terminal in the north end, so we can develop east-west routes that get people where they want to go faster.

Street Safety

On the topic of traffic, a lot of people don't like what they're hearing and seeing on their streets. They're concerned about speeding, traffic violations and vehicle noise.

In the next year, we will roll out some high-tech solutions to help us with this problem. The city has begun installing red light cameras at busy intersections. We're also looking at automated speed enforcement. Right now, city staff are looking at the best place to put them before they're installed in 2023.

A Greener Brantford

Voters also told us that they want a greener city.

During the last term of council, we declared a climate emergency. Council also committed to do more than simply pass a resolution. We decided to embody the intent of the resolution in our decision making.

First, we're electrifying the city's vehicle fleet. We've already purchased electric cars. Pickup trucks and buses are next on the list.

New buildings will be energy efficient, starting with the expansion of the police station.

We're adding more bike lanes throughout the city. They're not always popular but as more residents adopt alternative modes of travel, from bikes to scooters, we're going to need them even more.

The new green bin program will divert more waste into recycling, reducing the amount that goes into our landfill.

Our new Planning rules will protect natural areas and underground water.

We must continue to ensure our practices, plans and projects mitigate potential environmental and climate impact.

Brantford General Hospital

Residents also want a healthier Brantford.

The best piece of good news in many years came in March, when the Government of Ontario announced it is committed to rebuilding Brantford General Hospital. This will be a massive undertaking that will take up to a decade and cost as much as \$1.5 billion. It's the policy of the provincial government that the community must contribute 10 per cent of the cost, and pay 100% of the furniture and new equipment. That means, over the next few years, the greater regional community must raise at least \$150 million, probably closer to \$200 million.

The Brant Community Healthcare Foundation will lead the charge, but this has to be a community-wide effort involving residents, businesses, service clubs, charities, and others. The city must play a leading role by, first, developing a plan on how the City can make a major contribution to the campaign and, second, by being an active supporter.

It won't be easy, but I know we can do it. Whenever our community has faced a challenge in the past, we've risen to the occasion. When the new Brantford General Hospital rises, we'll finally have the hospital we need and deserve.

Southwest Community Centre and Park

We often say that Brantford is a great place to live, work and play.

For residents of Southwest Brantford, they've been on the short end of the stick when it comes to the play part. Even though that area has about one-fifth of the city's residents, it's short on amenities.

That's why it's so important that we push ahead with the plans for the Southwest Community Centre and Park. This new facility will have a community centre, a library, a gymnasium, and multi-purpose rooms for shared use with a new elementary school, not to mention additional playing fields including a much-needed cricket ground.

Partners

Finally, I want to discuss our relationship with our most important partners: The County of Brant, Six Nations of the Grand River and Mississaugas of the Credit.

During the past four years we have established a stronger, more productive relationship with the county that is already paying dividends. We have the joint affordable housing program and a new process for managing social services.

During the next term we need to build on that by exploring other areas of shared interest with the county. We need a regional transportation plan. We should talk about ways to maximize the return that both municipalities get from the Brantford Airport. We can talk about creative ways to work together on sewer and water services, landfill

operations, transit, and other topics to find ways to offer better services and control costs.

Building a better relationship with Indigenous Nations has been an important priority of the past council. We've been looking for nuts-and-bolts projects and programs where we can advance mutual interests. We hope that as we improve the working relationship, we can also improve the consultation process and promote reconciliation.

Staff have worked with first nations to develop lasting, meaningful connections based on reconciliation, and mutual prosperity.

There is also the big question that hangs over all of us: land claims. What can the City of Brantford do as an ally of Six Nations to help them resolve their claims? It's an unresolved source of tension between Indigenous people and the other residents of the Haldimand Tract lands. Our council has been advocating on behalf of Six Nations, urging the federal and provincial governments to get this resolved as soon as possible. We will continue to work alongside Six Nations to help push the issue to a conclusion.

Conclusion

Our community (like many across Canada), is divided. Covid-19 has divided us. Issues have separated us. Families and neighbours have turned on another. We feel divided.

I believe we have a duty not to exacerbate those divisions. Instead, we should focus on how we achieve common goals in the best interest of our community. We must be respectful of each other's uniqueness and different perspectives, but at the same time should not let those differences hinder our ability to best serve our community.

I am optimistic. I am hopeful. I am confident that our community and this elected council can do that.

As I mentioned at the start of this speech, city council and staff spent much of the last four years building a foundation for the future.

We will see a growing city with new opportunities – for employment, attainable housing, education, retail, entertainment, transportation and more. We will face challenges, differences, and as in the past, we will adapt, learn and make those opportunities work for our community.

Growth though means change, and change can be hard. It will be important then that as a council we communicate why change and growth is necessary and how we can best manage it, and adapt to it, so we reap the benefits of growth while at the same time maintaining what it is we love about our city.

We've had some difficult years, but a foundation for future success was laid. Now we must move forward from that foundation and focus on the future with optimism and a passion to seize the opportunities coming our way.