

Inauguration Speech

(December 4, 2018 Regent Theatre, Picton)

Good evening everyone.

His worship, Justice of the Peace, Ernie Parsons; David Jock, Elder, Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte; Reverend Audrey Whitney; visiting dignitaries and representatives of neighbouring municipalities; fellow councillors; County Chief Administration Officer, James Hepburn; County Clerk, Kim White; members of staff; family members and friends; and members of the public.

(How's that for a summary salutation of everyone in attendance tonight?)

Welcome and thank you all for making this celebration that much more special with your presence here tonight. I would like to welcome our friends from Kouga Local Municipality in South Africa who are in The County as part of the municipal exchange program organized, and paid for by Global affairs Canada (STAND).

I would like to thank Robert Quaiff for his participation this evening, as well as his leadership of our community during his term as mayor, and for the example he has set for me and members of council, that we will uphold for the next four years.

I would like to recognize those members of the last council whose cumulative experience and service to our community exceeds 100 years. Councillors Kevin Gale, Gord Fox, Barry Turpin, Jim Dunlop, Lenny Epstein, Treat Hull, Dianne O'Brien, Roy Pennell, Steve Graham and Dave Harrison all provided strength and leadership to their constituents. Thank you for your contributions to Prince Edward County. I ask you to thank them for their service. (APPLAUD)

I will also recognize our municipal staff who work so diligently on our behalf but are not commended enough for all the work they do. Thank you all.

As I'm sure everyone in the audience appreciates that it takes a lot of guts to put yourself out there in pursuit of election to municipal office. To those individuals who were unsuccessful in this election, thank you for your dedication to our community through your willingness to run in the election and undergo the public scrutiny inherent in the process. Please remain involved through some measure of service on another level be it a committee or another volunteer organization. We need you!

None of us on this stage tonight got here alone. I would like to thank the "other teams", the husbands, wives, partners and children of your elected officials whose support during the election and for the next four years has been, and is, so

important. You too have made a difference to the community through the support and patience you have and will provide.

I would also like to thank Dawn Ayer, Ken Dewar, Don Farrington, Richard Jones, Carlyn Moulton, Jim Plomer, Braydon Scully, Alan Whitely, and dozens of others who provided advice, insight and critical thinking during and after my campaign, and who attempted to plant hundreds of wire election sign stands into Prince Edward County's plentiful limestone bedrock, or distributed literature door-to-door.

Let me recognize "my home team". My daughter, Sara, and son, Andrew, and their partners, Cam and Megan; my sister, Di, who flew over from England to attend and didn't know that I knew she was going to be here (well, if you're going to be mayor, you have to know this stuff!); my partner, Mary, who has endured the long days and nights that come with being an elected official. Also here, is Andrew and Megan's daughter, Lucy, my granddaughter, who is exhibiting tonight the exemplary behavioral characteristics I have instilled in her. I would not be here without all of your support. Any of them can readily answer questions such as, "What's Steve REALLY like?"

The inauguration of the mayor and a new council is a big deal – it's certainly a big deal to all of us up here and to our families in attendance. The ceremony traditionally takes place in Shire Hall, but during my campaign I committed to an open,

communicative municipal government and Shire Hall doesn't lend itself to large public gatherings such as tonight's. Although it caused a bit of a kerfuffle when I said I wanted to move the ceremony to The Regent so the public could attend if they so wished, I would like to thank the Clerk's office and Kim White, as well as my assistant, Karen Frigault, for making this all happen. I would also like to thank Neil Shorthouse and the board, volunteers and staff of The Regent Theatre for their help. For those unaware, The Regent is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year and remains a vital part of our community.

At the conclusion of tonight's agenda, please join us in the lobby for refreshments ably supplied by Chef Michael Hoy.

Lastly, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the members of the public who, through their votes, expressed their confidence in me and my abilities.

On Monday, January 2nd, 1905, municipal elections occurred throughout Ontario. In Picton, Mr. G. M. Farrington was elected to the office of mayor. 346 kilometers away, well west of Picton, Mr. W. J. Ferguson, my great-grandfather, was elected mayor of the city of Stratford, Ontario.

The following words, spoken by him at his inaugural meeting of Stratford city council on January 9th, 1905, were as meaningful to him, then, as they are to me, now:

“The occupancy of this chair, which has come to me through the good will of the electors, I accept with due appreciation and sensibility of its importance and responsibility.”

The voters of The County also expressed their confidence in electing its members of council. To the acclaimed, re-elected or newly elected members of council – Councillors Kate MacNaughton, Phil St. Jean, Brad Nieman, Phil Prinzen, Mike Harper, Andreas Bolik, Janice Maynard, Bill McMahan, Jamie Forrester, Bill Roberts, Ernie Margetson, Stewart Bailey and John Hirsch – I will repeat what my great-grandfather said to his council members so long ago with a little license for words, “I have, indeed, great pleasure in officially welcoming you, (ladies and) gentlemen to a seat at the (Council horseshoe) of our municipality.....It is an ideal condition of municipal politics when the council is a unit on the purpose to advance the (County’s) interests.”

I very much look forward to working with all of you in our stewardship of the fiscal, economic and social interests of Prince Edward County.

You voted for change – change in the members of this new council and a change in the way we do business. And change didn’t wait.

I am humbled by the trust you have placed in me, and I am here today to thank you for that trust, and to get to work on the County's business.

During my campaign, based on the optimism for the future and the ideas I heard from people in every corner of the county, I pledged to do three things – to galvanize participation by the many talented people in this community to help address our challenges; to be a collaborative and action oriented leader; and to be a strong advocate for our municipality with our neighbours, the province and the federal government.

Galvanize, Collaborate and Advocate. This will be my personal mantra going forward.

I want to acknowledge the history of this place. We stand on the traditional grounds of the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte, and I am very pleased that we are joined here today by Mohawk Elder David Jock.

Whether we can count the number of generations that our families have been in Prince Edward County, or whether we are relative newcomers who live in a house that will forever be called by someone else's name, we are all neighbours. In a small island community, it is imperative that neighbours work together to find creative and innovative ways to work with what we have to build something better, something greater.

We are on the cusp of a new decade. The children that started school this September will be graduating from high school at Prince Edward Collegiate Institute in 2030. If you have been or are a parent, you know those years will go by quickly. So I asked myself, what can we do together for that graduating class of 2030? What problems will we have addressed and put behind us by then? What opportunities will be there for them in our community?

It's not that we don't have ideas about how to meet our challenges of affordable housing, transportation, education or making sure everyone has enough to eat. It's that often the process hinders debate, resolution and implementation.

Our County Community Foundation has become a terrific partner, collaborating with dozens of engaged groups and individuals to look at our specific issues, find ways to work together to address those issues and measure our progress. It's a model that I want to emulate, to build on. They have been looking at food security, transportation, lifelong learning and other things in collaborative ways. Council will use that model to create "Task Teams" and to strengthen Advisory committees to address the important issues of our shoreline, water, infrastructure, heritage, and the environment among others.

All of us are most appreciative of the activities of our social service agencies and service clubs that help those in need.

Those people who need a leg up to ensure they are not left behind. We will continue to support the activities of The ROC, and The Hub and PELC, some students of which are here this evening learning about municipal politics.

Seated around the horseshoe at Shire Hall, we on council can get overwhelmed with noise. We pledge here today to do a better job of communicating the facts, the challenges, the issues, so that our debates are informed, so that we keep members of the community engaged in the discussion, so we can focus on the issues that matter the most.

Solutions don't have to be complex, sometimes we just have to get on with things. Most of you will be familiar with the Millennium Trail – and you may have seen pictures of Barry Davidson and a gang of volunteers working to rebuild part of it, all armed with clippers, rakes, shovels or whatever else they had in their garden shed. They just got on with it and I think they are an inspiring example. We can get things done a little faster.

There was a fascinating video on the internet recently showing an urban tunnel being built in two days under a freeway in Denmark. When I think about how long it took to get the Wooler Road on-ramp to the 401 opened or the Brighton swing bridge operating, I'm left to wonder, what do the Danes have that we don't? What will be our accelerator? But I'm convinced

the answer doesn't have to be imported. It resides here, in our greatest asset, in our people.

But our council and staff must be enablers. We mustn't be here to tell people what they can't do – we must be finding creative ways to help them achieve their goals and dreams. I want us to build a reputation as a place where you can get things done quickly and well and thereby contribute to our wonderful community.

Our council and staff are going to be directed to find more revenue from sources beyond the tax base of our full time and seasonal residents. Whether from other levels of government, our hundreds of thousands of visitors, from investors or generous individuals, we are going to get creative in our advocacy and requests.

For we have things to do. We have a major hospital building project that should be finished when those 1st graders are moving into sixth or seventh grade. We have an urgent need to build more houses or apartments that their parents can afford to rent or buy and I'd like to see real progress on that front by the time those kids are in grade three or four. We have businesses that are short of workers and we have people who need more employment – together, with the creative talent in this community – indeed, in this room - we can work to resolve both of those issues and will do so on a collaborative basis.

If you believe that you, as a citizen, have a contribution to make, I invite you to submit your resume or credentials. Let us know what skills you bring to the table, what experiences you have had that you can draw on to contribute.

The local volunteer brain trust has always been our strength. That's how radio stations and arts trails and arenas and hospices and programs like the ROC or Reaching for Rainbows get built. That's not new. What is going to be new is how we as a municipal government engage with our volunteer brain trust. This is the beginning of a new era of collaboration and opportunity.

You voted for change as a county. In my meetings with the individual councillors after the election, we all agreed that the days of ward vs ward, the north vs the south – those days...and those nouns, must be put behind us. We will be focused as a council on the County from coast to coast to coast to coast, as a whole, attending to the needs of our northern, southern, eastern and western residents.

The County is more than a brand. We have been entrusted with a remarkable legacy, and a responsibility to make sure that the next decade, the twenties, is a time of building on that legacy, ensuring that for that PECl graduating class, Prince Edward County will be the envy of all the other municipalities in the province.

In conclusion, I commit to being visible and available whether in Shire Hall or throughout the towns, villages and hamlets of the County or the numerous events that take place every weekend. It is only by doing so, by listening to people, that one can gauge the measure of ones success. Although the days of a quick trip to the grocery store are behind me, and Robert will understand, chance encounters with residents and business owners are as meaningful to me as I hope they are to those who strike up a conversation in the produce department.

One final note: I freely admit to being from away, from Toronto. I made an emotional investment in Prince Edward County that began 30 years ago that remains as steadfast today as it did back in the late 1980s upon my first visit and stay at Angelines in Bloomfield. Monica Fida, here tonight, remains, with her children, Alex and Melanie, owner of that establishment. Monica, this is ALL your fault.

I then chose to live here, to invest further through support for local businesses. There are many “from away” who have been attracted to The County and it is my hope that more will come, bringing with them their ability to make some form of contribution. All are welcome.

But to all I say this, please be respectful of the people, attractions and special attributes of The County, and of our

historical and agricultural heritage that attracted you to it in the first place.

We have an extraordinary municipality, unlike any other, and I am excited, motivated, proud and honored to be your mayor.

Thank you all.