

Mayor’s annual address

Introduction

Good evening everyone. Thank you for joining us for the first annual address of our term.

Following an election that saw a record high voter turnout, Council has just passed its one year anniversary. I can say a great deal has been accomplished, and that Council has put pathways in place to some significant achievements this term. Today’s address is a collection of inputs from each member of Council and our directors of departments. In consequence, like good Christmas cake, it’s full of rich content. It will take a moment or two to read for you and digest.

I would like to start with a shout-out to Saanich residents for electing this remarkable new council of nine, independent, diverse, intelligent and passionate members. Each Councillor was screened through a rigorous election process that ensured we valued the fiscal and foundational policies that make Saanich a successful town and country coastal municipality. Simultaneously residents selected us to take on the crises they see in housing, climate and the environment.

I am pleased to report on a Council with a vision to deliver service excellence for our current and future residents. A Council that is working productively for a municipality where our children’s children can thrive and prosper.

To achieve this, by necessity it is a curious Council. As Council, we are asking a lot of questions. We are prepared to challenge both ourselves and the status quo. We are motivated to seek ways to do better. In this undertaking, we are fortunate to have staff and leadership teams in Saanich with the same interests in improving our efficiency and effectiveness.

We are also blessed by the opportunity to build upon the legacies of the farsighted Mayors and Councils that went before us. Indeed, the images of our former Mayors and the works of their Councils adorn this chamber.

New Strategic Plan

- In November, Council adopted its 2019-2023 Strategic Plan.
- Based on a wide array of inputs this plan guides the priorities for our term.
- There are 40 major initiatives under five newly created areas:
 1. Community well-being;
 2. Affordable housing, land use and infrastructure management;
 3. Organizational excellence;
 4. Economic diversification; and
 5. Climate action and environmental leadership.

I will describe a selection of works in each of these to provide a flavour of the efforts carried out in Saanich on a daily basis. Let’s begin with organizational excellence.

Organizational excellence

Several departments have either undertaken, are in the process of completing, or are about to initiate reviews of their service delivery efficiency and effectiveness. These include our Fire Department, Police Department, Finance, Engineering, Parks and Recreation, Legislative Services, IT, Planning Department, Communications, Council procedures, and the multi-departmental delivery of our development permits.

Fire services

- In 2019 the Fire Department completed a service audit and a 2020 Master Fire Plan. This provides a comprehensive analysis of the department's current state and future requirements.
- Implementing the 40 recommendations in the Master Plan will ensure that efficient, effective and fiscally responsible services continue.
- 2019 marked the 100th anniversary of a department working effectively to keep Saanich residents and property safe.
- Our Fire Department is by all measures available, one of the very best in the country.

Police services – a new chief

- With a 31 year career in Saanich policing, Deputy Chief Scott Green was promoted to our 17th Chief Constable. He continues a 113 year history of keeping Saanich safe.
- The new leadership team has engaged in service reviews, organizational restructuring, and strategies to improve effectiveness, efficiency, and employee well-being.
- Provincial figures indicate Saanich Police costs \$292 per capita compared to a municipal police average of \$405, and to some urban police departments where costs range from \$451 - \$510 per capita.
- Our Police Department is by all measures available, one of the very best in the country.

Finance department:

- We've heard that residents want to participate in our financial processes, but need more information before they can contribute.
- In 2019, we launched ***Shaping Saanich*** - a public education multi-channel campaign to ensure residents understand the elements of municipal decision making and opportunities to participate.
- We also launched trimester reports of key finance and performance indicators.
- Financially, Saanich is amongst the most robust, well run of all municipalities.

Parks and recreation department:

- Based on surveys of market, facilities and capacity, the Parks and Recreation Department has moved to enhance program delivery, efficiency and effectiveness.
- A growing part of our programming includes diversity inclusion, arts and culture.
- In September, Council approved continuing to provide high performance sport organizations and clubs with preferred access to Saanich Commonwealth Place after the 25 year operating and funding agreement with the federal and provincial governments ends in August 2020.

Engineering department

- The 2019 Strategic Facilities Master Plan provides a framework for our buildings.
- The goal is to continuously improve service delivery over the next 20 years.
- The first projects in 2020 are redevelopment of fire station #2 on Elk Lake Drive and redevelopment of the parks and public works yard on McKenzie Avenue.
- In 2019 the Department commenced work on becoming Organizational Quality Management (OQM) certified. This will lead to OQM qualified practices and processes.

- Last Monday, to effectively manage our assets, Council approved the new Asset Management Policy, including hiring an asset manager. This fast tracked a Strategic Plan initiative.

Legislative services

Council and staff are committed to reviewing our processes to create efficiencies.

Some examples include:

- Reviewing our council procedures;
- Initiating trimester check-ins on the Strategic Plan;
- Initiating trimester check-ins by our CAO;
- The trimester reports of key performance measures;
- Updating processes for community grants; and
- Updating advisory committees and our liaisons positions.

A new communication newsletter

The new **Saanich Spotlight** quarterly newsletter provides updates across all municipal departments.

Standing committee on finance and governance

- In 2019, a four Council member Standing Committee on Finance and Governance was established.
- The committee is making recommendations on items related to corporate governance and financial administration including:
 - Council and committee governance and meeting procedures;
 - Corporate and financial controls, policies and reporting; and
 - Audit planning and compliance.

Development permits

- In its 2019 budget, Council approved nine new staff positions to support services tied to improving our delivery of development permits.
- In the same budget, Council approved software purchases to enable the electronic submission of development applications.
- Conscious of the crisis in housing supply and affordability, Council recently approved a review of our multi-departmental service in the delivery of our development permits.
- This review will have a focus on evaluating and improving our efficiency and time lines.

Resilient Saanich

In 2019 Council moved forward on its commitment for Resilient Saanich (previously the BioDiversity Framework). In 2020 we look forward to setting up the Technical Committee to guide our process towards Resilient Saanich.

Citizens' assembly

- Council worked with the City of Victoria in 2019 to develop the terms of reference for a Citizens' Assembly to examine the "cost, benefits and disadvantages" of amalgamating Saanich with Victoria.
- Once jointly agreed, the results will be presented to the province for approval.

- Pending that outcome, the process towards implementing the Citizens' Assembly will be initiated. Once formed, this issue will be in the hands of the Assembly.
- A possible outcome is for the Citizens' Assembly to recommend the dissolution of Saanich and its amalgamation with Victoria.

I now turn our attention to highlights in the other areas.

Community well-being

First Nations reconciliation

- We are committed to leadership through action in healing the wounds of the past.
- We are working to establish formal government to government relationships with our neighbouring First Nations governments.
- Through the South Island Prosperity Partnership, we are engaged with nine of the ten First Nations and over 17,000 Indigenous people of the South Island in supporting First Nations self-directed economic development activities.
- With First Nations artist Carey Newman, we unveiled Earth Drums in September, commemorating Canada 150. The Earth Drums engage people in reconciliation by asking them to change their relationship with the land.
- Saanich Police, our staff, and Council are actively participating in reconciliation programs.
- Council approved the budget for First Nations artwork in our municipal hall.

Diversity, inclusion and enhanced multicultural engagement

- Saanich is dedicated to enhancing diversity, multicultural engagement and reconciliation.
- Council's inauguration was initiated with a First Nations and a multi-faith blessing.
- In 2019 we hosted a Diwali celebration; participated in Iftar at Ramadan; joined the Vaisakhi and Pride parades; joined in the Victoria Urban Reconciliation Dialogue; and launched our first Orange Shirt Day campaign.
- Inclusion in Saanich includes persons with disabilities as well as the growing older adult populations, youth-at-risk and new Canadians.

All ages and abilities

- Invited to present at the World Health Organization Conference in Tokyo, Japan in 2019, Saanich is recognized worldwide for its all ages and abilities programs.
- Our Strategic Plan includes collaboration with six municipal partners to identify actions to improve access to childcare.

Road safety

- Road safety is a top priority for Saanich and our citizens.
- Saanich Police continues to focus on collision reduction through numerous road safety initiatives.
- Saanich is near completion of its **Safe Routes to School** infrastructure program.
- Our Active Transportation program for sidewalks and cycle routes is underway.
- Saanich is engaged in road safety discussions with the province, UBCM and our neighbours.

- Reflecting the importance of road safety, enforcement efforts by our police increased 35 percent in 2019 over 2018.

Kings road community natural green space

- Responding to community calls for a natural green space, in 2019 Council purchased a unique piece of land from BC Hydro for \$5.5 million.
- Located on the Bowker Creek, this 2.23 hectares near Jubilee Hospital is in the Saanich Panhandle.
- For 70 years, it has served neighbourhood and regional needs for a natural green space.
- The Saanich Legacy Foundation is leading a fundraising initiative to raise \$2.75 million to secure this as a permanent resource for future generations.

Rededication of Shelbourne “Street of Unfinished Dreams”

- Last fall, Saanich and the Memorial Avenue Committee rededicated Memorial Avenue on Shelbourne to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the 1918 Armistice and the 1921 Dedication of the Memorial London Planetrees.
- As part of the Street of Unfinished Dreams, Saanich installed 30 sign toppers and approved production of a film documentary.

Affordable housing, land use and infrastructure management

Housing strategy

- Our Strategic Plan includes developing a housing strategy to identify and implement policies to increase our supply, affordability and diversity of housing.
- The housing crisis indicates a shortage of some 10,000 rental units in the region.

New housing

In 2019, the Nigel Valley plan for some 800 units is the single largest approval of affordable and supportive housing units in Saanich's history. 600 new on-campus housing units at the University of Victoria are moving through the approval process. On the horizon, we see the potential for 520 rental units at University Heights. Our draft Uptown Douglas Corridor plan envisions options for 4,000 or more new housing units. These and other applications are part of the solution.

Rental housing occupancy

Council is reviewing our Zoning Bylaw, specifically section 5.20 which pertains to occupancy levels in single family homes.

Garden suites

Our regulations for garden suites are under review including consideration of options for garden suites and secondary suites on the same property.

Mayor's standing committee on housing and affordability

- A four Council member Standing Committee on Housing Supply and Affordability was created with support from Council.

- Charged with exploring options to address our crisis in housing affordability and supply the committee is already bringing forward recommendations for council to consider.
- Given our interest in the housing crisis, seven members of Council were interested in joining the committee.

Economic diversification

Sports tourism

Working with Destination Victoria and others, a series of sports and economic boosting events are being hosted in 2020 including the BC 55 Plus Games, the Federation International Basketball Association Olympic Qualifying Tournament and the Francophonie Games.

Film studios

- Lights! Camera! Action!
- Camosun College and the University of Victoria are in (secret) early stage joint discussions with potential industry partners on building a film studio and educational resources in Saanich.
- This initiative is being aided by the Vancouver Island South Film and Media Commission and the South Island Prosperity Partnership.
- Saanich based film studios will enhance our economic diversity, resiliency and income and will gain Saanich a share of the \$3.4 billion film industry business in BC.

Advisory committee

Council's Planning Transportation and Economic Development Advisory Committee is working on further opportunities including an in-house economic development capability and is being aided with support from the South Island Prosperity Partnership.

Climate action and environmental leadership

Climate emergency and accelerated actions

- Saanich was the first municipality in the Capital Regional District to declare a climate emergency and to bring accelerated actions in response to our declaration.
- Five community actions Council has committed to are:
 - **Zero emission vehicles:** EV charging infrastructure requirements for all new developments as of June 2020, doubling the number of Saanich-owned public charging stations and promoting and incentivizing electric bikes;
 - **Low carbon heating:** converting all oil heating systems in Saanich to low carbon heating systems by 2030;
 - **Energy upgrades:** enhanced support for energy upgrades in existing buildings;
 - **Trees:** doubling the number of trees planted annually in Saanich, to reach 10,000 trees by 2025; and
 - **Capacity:** building the capacity of Saanich residents to make the changes needed to meet our climate targets.
- Five corporate actions Council has committed to are:
 - sustainable commuting program for employees;
 - a climate scorecard in development project reports to Council;

- a carbon price in business case analyses for projects;
- developing a fleet strategy to reduce emissions; and
- using low carbon food in catering for meetings and events.

We're updating our climate plan

- Saanich is updating its climate plan and working with residents and stakeholders to determine how to adapt to a changing climate.
- New climate targets to align with our climate emergency declaration are:
 - to achieve 50 percent reduction of community-wide greenhouse gas emissions by 2030; and
 - to reach net zero emissions before 2050 to become a 100 percent renewable energy community.
- Currently, public input is being incorporated into the final version of our Climate Plan with initial implementation expected in early 2020.
- Saanich's current ecological footprint equals about three planet's worth of resources.
- To reduce this, we recognize the need to engage our residents in taking action.

One planet Saanich

- To help residents take individual and group action, in 2017 Council engaged the One Planet Saanich initiative.
- One Planet Living envisions a world where people enjoy happy, healthy lives within their fair share of the earth's resources and leaving space for wildlife and wilderness.
- Participants included schools, local businesses, faith and community organizations who created action plans to reduce their ecological footprint.
- One Planet Saanich, together with the South Island Prosperity Partnership is developing a regional workshop in February 2020 for a One Planet Region.
- Stakeholders in One Planet Saanich and South Island Prosperity Partnership have applied to the Association of Vancouver Island Coastal Communities to present options for a One Planet Island.

Single use plastic pollution

Council has taken leadership action in Saanich, at the CRD and with the Province in moving towards banning single use plastics and polystyrene products.

Tree protection

- In our Strategic Plan, Council actively supports our Urban Forest Strategy.
- The main goal of the strategy is to protect and enhance our urban forest.
- In the fall, Council approved interim options to improve our Tree Protection Bylaw.
- We would like to increase the number of replacement trees needed and strengthen the bylaw.
- As mentioned, Council undertook to double the number of trees planted to reach 10,000 trees by 2025.

Food and farmland security

- Our Agriculture and Food Security plan focuses on seven key themes for improved food security.
- Implementing the Panama Flats Concept Plan is included in the new Strategic Plan.

- Conversations with the CRD for a regional farmland trust are underway.
- Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable, supported by South Island Prosperity Partnership, is undertaking a feasibility study into creating a food processing hub to support regional agriculture.

Deliver land use and mobility enhancement

- Our 30 year Active Transportation and All Ages and Abilities plans are underway.
- After years of working with citizens to find solutions to some of Shelbourne's most immediate mobility and transportation challenges, I am thrilled to announce that we are one step closer to starting construction on the Shelbourne Street Improvement Project, which is anticipated to start mid-2020. The project includes significant upgrades to transportation infrastructure and underground utilities, and will provide safer routes for all users. There will be a balanced mobility network where walking, cycling and public transit are inviting options for all ages and abilities.

Taken together I believe you can see that Saanich is amongst the very best managed municipalities in the province and indeed the country. It is my true privilege to serve as your Mayor with Council and work on the tasks you assign us.

Conclusion

We have heard from our residents that Saanich is a truly wonderful place to live. However, they worry that the status quo on housing, climate and the environment is not meeting their needs.

In this annual address, I hope you can see that your new council and our staff are challenging themselves to reach these new expectations. I further hope the highlights I have shared this evening show some of the ways we're going to get there.

In closing, Council is open to receiving your questions, concerns, and feedback. Productive and respectful public engagement is a corner stone of our decision-making processes. We have added a series of trimester check-ins to help facilitate this. We need your input to help us continue to prioritize initiatives that will make Saanich an even better community.

To my Council colleagues, Saanich staff, and the residents of our wonderful community, I greatly look forward to continuing this collaborative work through the rest of our term.

Thank you.
Fred Haynes
Saanich Mayor