



The Corporation of the District of Saanich | Mayor's Office

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Appendix "A"

Inaugural Address

Mayor Richard Atwell, District of Saanich

December 1, 2014

I would like to warmly welcome everyone in attendance this evening at this Inaugural Meeting of Council in the District of Saanich. I would like to acknowledge and respect that we are within the Coast Salish traditional territories.

There are a number of distinguished guests in attendance, Freeman Dr. Ron Lou-Poy and Former Mayor and Freeman, Howard Sturrock. On behalf of both myself and the incoming Council we truly appreciate your presence on this historic night for all Saanich residents.

Before I get into my address, I also wish to honour the outgoing Mayor, Frank Leonard, and the two outgoing members of Council, Paul Gerrard and Nichola Wade. Your service and commitment to the citizens of Saanich is commendable and you are wished the very best upon your return to private life. Thanks to you all on behalf of Saanich Council and all Saanich residents for the years you dedicated to public service.

I also wish to thank those who participated in our democracy during the recent civic elections and to acknowledge the trust you have placed in me to lead Council and District staff on behalf of the citizens of Saanich as your 25th Mayor. My primary objective is to make this both an exciting and productive new chapter in the great history of our District.

I take very seriously the need to respect the wishes of the electorate, and I hope this Council will join with me solidly to ensure that the community's strong desire for change is respected and reflected in the decisions we will make together over the next four years.

I would also like to congratulate Councillors Susan Brice, Judy Brownoff, Vic Derman, Dean Murdock, Vicki Sanders and Leif Wergeland on your re-election. The experience you bring to this table is invaluable and welcomed by me as your Mayor. And to my fellow newcomers Councillors Fred Haynes and Colin Plant, I look forward to a very positive, productive and equally close working relationship over the next four years.

MAYOR'S COMMITMENT

The orderly and smooth transition of power is a cornerstone of our democracy and transitions can challenge any political system. Every transition to new leadership implies change, and hence a challenge to political stability.

I want to assure this Council and our dedicated public servants who deliver the services on behalf of the District that my desire for a better Saanich is based upon mutual respect and beneficial outcomes for all, not just for the residents of Saanich.

In the run up to this transition, I have had the opportunity to meet with community leaders - past and present, business persons, labour representatives, as well as Saanich staff. I want everyone who works for Saanich to know that I welcome all of your input and ideas. We are all equal in our desire to do a good job for Saanich residents.

I also wish to emphasize that I am not just "some guy" from the high-tech sector who showed up in a suit with some blue campaign signs and got elected. I am your Mayor for the next four years and I take seriously the commitment to making amazing things happen for the District of Saanich that will do us all proud.

OPEN GOVERNMENT

Effective governance based on responsiveness, efficiency, transparency and public accountability is another pillar of political legitimacy in our democracy. In this 21st century, capable, reliable, and transparent institutions will be the key to achieving success.

As a Council, we will also open up Council to all members of the public, no matter the agenda and we will institute webcasting as part of an evaluation of the suitability of this chamber as it relates to effective public engagement and participation. My main policy as your Mayor will be an open door policy for one and for all. My role as Mayor also transcends any partisan or other slate politics which all Councils must set aside for the benefit of their residents. It is my personal pledge to you to be responsive to all concerns that originate from the great diversity of our constituents. I believe in treating people fairly, with dignity and respect and I also believe the Mayor must be a good listener. As a leader, I ask only for the same level of respect as we try to find ways together to do things better, and yes differently.

BALLOT QUESTION

On November 15 of this year, the people of Saanich voted for a change in leadership style and direction. In addition, over 88% of the voters made it clear, through the informal ballot question that they wish to see improvements to governance over the next four years. This includes not only the way we operate internally as a municipal government but how we as a Council conduct ourselves and interact as the largest municipality within the Capital Regional District.

The influence of Saanich in the Greater Victoria Region is exceptional, and we have an obligation to show we can work collaboratively and positively with our municipal partners on important issues such as climate change, sewage treatment, transportation infrastructure, the regional economy and, yes, exploring both the pros and cons of the amalgamation of municipal services.

It is clear to me that on all of these issues, as well as others, that voters throughout the region have resoundingly expressed an appetite for their Mayors and Councillors to move away from operating within individual silos. Citizens correctly have high hopes for both Mayors and Councillors to achieve great things on their behalf, not just within their borders but beyond them.

I accept, that there are issues larger than Saanich itself in this region and therefore, I would like to see this Council join with me in demonstrating that we are not only leaders in the region who can be relied upon to make decisions that will take the District of Saanich and the region as a whole forward by leaps and bounds over the next four years, but that we are united in our resolve to address the many issues our citizens face whether it be economically, environmentally, socially or otherwise. This will be no small task but it is a task we must succeed at if we are to move forward effectively on behalf of this community.

GOVERNANCE AND COOPERATION

With this 88% mandate from Saanich voters to move forward with a review regarding how we govern ourselves in Saanich, I therefore, hereby announce the formation of a Governance and Cooperation Review Select Committee within the District of Saanich.

I will Chair this committee in my capacity as Mayor, and the committee will be consulting with highly experienced people to analyze and design a local governance model that is above all – cutting edge. The chief aim of our governance review is in support of allowing our organization to become more open, more responsive and ultimately more effective to all stakeholders. This governance review will also involve all of my Council colleagues, all levels of staff, and rely upon our citizens to inform the decision making process using the highest standards of public participation.

Saanich must become more effective at delivering services to the public if we are to benefit from progressive economic development. We must also support people whose business is to attract greater investment within Saanich borders, including the high-tech sector, and we must strengthen the lines of communication within our departments to resolve any outstanding grievances and issues.

This Council will announce more detail regarding the structure and timelines for the Governance and Cooperation Review Select Committee in the coming weeks.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The next thing I would like to announce is the formation of a Mayor's Task Force on Climate Change. It is wonderful that Saanich has a Climate Action Plan, however, we require direct oversight towards ensuring it is more than just a feel-good document, and that it is actually truly meeting all the targets that have been set forth.

Climate change affects us all and it does not discriminate amongst communities on this planet as we have seen over and over through recent world events. The looming effects of weather disasters from climate change on our economy and infrastructure including the devastation caused by floods, droughts, erosion, super-storms and more are ignored at our own peril. Therefore we must be proactive and vigilant right here at home.

The design, revision, and implementation of our policies, practices, regulations, investments and other programs in Saanich must now be viewed through the climate change lens. We must be truly prepared and responsive to the new realities of climate change. As Mayor, I intend to walk the talk on climate change and as such, I will be looking to have the existing plan formally audited. In the coming days and weeks I will table specific terms of reference for this standing committee of Council.

ECONOMIC ROUND TABLE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

I believe that in order for Saanich to retain the qualities that make it such a wonderful community, we need to strengthen our existing and unique assets. I am announcing the establishment of the Mayor's Economic Round Table on Sustainable Development.

This Round Table will provide an open door for business and industry to provide direct advice and recommendations to Council regarding how we can be a leader in job creation and economic development, taking Saanich to new heights. I will act as a liaison between the Round Table on

Sustainable Development and the Climate Action Task Force to ensure we are growing both economically and environmentally to find the balance between development and preserving the natural beauty and charm of Saanich. A clean, flourishing Saanich for the next 25 years and beyond is the objective and that work starts now.

JOB CREATION

Job creation in Saanich by supporting existing business sectors and attracting new ones must also be a high priority for the new Council. We have many avenues available to us in how we achieve this, including our ability to partner with the Province's B.C. Jobs Plan to create more employment opportunities over the next four years. A highly skilled workforce supported by sectors that operate within Saanich will ensure that Saanich will remain a viable place to live, work and play in the years ahead.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Creating more affordable housing opportunities means identifying key areas where higher density housing clusters can be constructed. By encouraging developments with innovative infrastructure, and clean energy, we will demonstrate that Saanich once again is leading the way in our region and I want to remind everyone that the best way to ensure that there is affordable housing is by ensuring there is an adequate supply of it.

SAFE COMMUNITIES

I am also a firm believer that we must ensure that Saanich remains a safe community. A community with increased citizen awareness, education and involvement creates shared responsibility and ownership of local safety issues. Shared ownership of local safety increases the capacity of the community to respond to and plan for safety concerns and I will work very closely with our police and fire services and other municipal departments to ensure that we continue to maintain appropriate levels of service and standards for public safety.

Response times and our capacity for emergency preparedness are two areas I intend to keep a close eye on over the next four years and I would ask those in attendance to join with me at this time to offer our appreciation to the men and women in our police and fire services.

They are key partners in a safe Saanich, and they are there for residents when we most need them. Our other key partners for success exist within our community groups, and resident associations. To all of you, thank you for your ongoing efforts to ensure that citizens' voices are heard. You not only will have my ear, but I plan to consult with you and ensure that you remain a vital resource for Council informing our greater awareness of the issues that matter within our diverse community.

SENIORS

As I have previously implied, I am committed to moving Saanich forward in support of our younger residents and families to be able to afford their first homes and to enjoy a greater diversity of job opportunities.

I am also mindful of another sector of our community – our seniors. It is well recognized how important it is to allow seniors to age in place, and I am committed to helping support our seniors to remain independent for as long as possible.

I will be a supportive voice for our seniors and I recognize the outstanding efforts of those involved with the Healthy Saanich Advisory Committee in supporting our seniors. It is my intention to raise the profile of Healthy Saanich over the next four years starting with my announcement tonight of the establishment of the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Seniors Issues.

This committee will advise Council directly on matters pertaining to our seniors and I will have more information regarding this, including appointments of Council representatives and citizen representatives in the near future.

TRANSPORTATION

With respect to infrastructure, we need to take considerable strides over next four years on all fronts. Infrastructure must not be ignored in any community.

The elephant in the room in our regional transportation planning continues in an unresolved state. The McKenzie / Trans-Canada Highway Intersection is an issue I am committed to helping solve, starting with meetings with Federal and Provincial representatives. Already before taking office, I have had one meeting at the Provincial level and more will follow. Securing funding to address this intersection will be a very high priority during my tenure as your Mayor over the next four years.

SEWAGE TREATMENT

Finally, our own citizens and the citizens of this region are now looking to this Council and wondering what will be our official position going forward following the multi-million dollar failure of the McLoughlin Point sewage treatment proposal.

I want to emphasize this evening that I believe it is critical that both myself and those from this Council who will be attending and voting as Directors at the Capital Regional District Board on this major infrastructure project, have a collaborative, carefully considered and unified position that is aligned with the direction of Saanich Council.

We must also be cognizant of the fact that whatever solution we come up with, that it must be affordable to taxpayers and offer best value over the long-term. As your mayor, I will be working very hard to ensure that Saanich contributes a fiscally responsible and environmentally sound voice to the development of regional sewage treatment in the months ahead that is ultimately respectful of all residents and neighbourhoods.

COOPERATION

Without leadership and Council cooperation on these many key issues I have referenced this evening, ladies and gentlemen, we will not achieve measurable progress and positive outcomes. Stagnation is not an option for this community and it is not an option for me as your Mayor the next four years.

We have the capacity at this table to come together and do great things, but it is the responsibility of each and every one at this Council table to demonstrate that – to the people of the District of Saanich on each and every issue that will be voted on from this day forward.

CONCLUSION

In closing, let me conclude my remarks by saying that I once again appreciate everyone who has attended, and I wish to pay special thanks to our staff who have been involved and who have worked diligently with me to ensure a smooth transition that ultimately respects the will of the community, during this time of change.

I trust that Council will advance to the work at hand over the next four years on these critical and universal issues and do what is best for our dear Saanich, and may that grant us a greener, healthier, safer and more prosperous community four years from now and beyond.

Thank you.

Richard Atwell
Mayor of Saanich
Dec 1, 2014