

City Councillors, Honoured Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to a new day in Barrie.

In this municipal election, voters across Canada turned out in record numbers, and chose change in their communities. In large cities like Toronto, Calgary and Ottawa, and in smaller communities closer to home, this election was a loud and clear message for a new direction.

Tonight I would like to begin by thanking the people of the City of Barrie for their confidence. Here in Barrie, we now have an opportunity to move the city forward.

To every Barrie resident who took the time to study the candidates, to talk about the election with their neighbours or co-workers, and most of all to come out and vote, whether or not it was for me – thank you.

From the beginning of the election campaign, I was supported by the most incredible family anyone in public life could ask for – my wife Jennifer, my daughter Cassie, and my parents Bob and Joan. They are my bedrock and why I am able to do what I do.

I was supported by a remarkable group of volunteers. At the core of our team were ten people who began in February to put together the campaign and who followed it through month after month until election-day. Tom, Sue, Mike, Peter, Bob, Sarah, Larry, Marg, Alan, and Tim – I cannot thank you enough. Quito Maggi, my campaign manager, who directed a campaign like no-one had ever seen, and Jayne LeClair, our office manager, who spent two months nearly full-time on the campaign, I owe you a great debt of thanks.

Members of City Council- congratulations! It's now time to get down to business.

We have a lot of work to do. We have been elected to move the city forward together. And in doing this, we must make decisions not just for today, but for the future. Every motion we debate, every request or development that we rule on, every by-law we pass, we must see through the lens of the long-term. This is one of the toughest responsibilities of a politician; to see beyond the immediate benefit or cost of something, and recognize the long-term importance to the community. Sometimes the unpopular decision will be the right one.

With all of the experience around this table, I am confident that this Council will be up to the challenge of governing with vision. And we are going to govern as a team, a team that respects each other's views and respects the offices that we have been elected to.

There are some who have called this election a watershed. But if it is truly to be a watershed, this Council will need to deliver on the promise of positive change that Barrie residents now expect.

There will be three great projects for this council over the next four years.

The first project will be planning for the next generation of growth in Barrie. As a Council, we have a rare opportunity to shape the next chapter of growth in the city's history. The decisions we make as a Council about the annexation lands and about intensification will shape our city for decades to come.

In our new lands, we need to do things differently. We need to create opportunities for people to work closer to home, and we need to build neighbourhoods in a more sustainable way, that allows residents to meet more of their daily requirements within walking distance of their homes.

At the same time, we must make better use of lands within the city. Vacant sites need to be redeveloped, to lessen the pressure on suburban growth.

Redevelopment and revitalization are good for the taxpayer; by growing inside the city, we make better use of all the services we have already built and paid for, while adding to the tax base.

Revitalizing Downtown Barrie requires new ideas. I believe we need a game-changer downtown – we need new economic engines in our core area if it is to thrive. That's why I will be pursuing two new initiatives in particular. First, the conversion of the Transit Terminal to a permanent food market building, to draw tourists to the Downtown. Second, a post-secondary campus in the City Centre. The presence of hundreds of university students and faculty in our downtown every day can be a tremendous engine for revitalization and a permanent benefit to Barrie.

The next great project is to put ourselves on a new economic path, to create jobs and a more prosperous community. I believe this new path will be built on the strengths of Barrie's economy today, as well as through new sectors that are right now in their earliest days in our city.

Three out of four new jobs in any city are created by businesses that are already located there. Whether it is helping a small printing plant on Commerce Park Drive to grow, or a skilled electrician on Anne Street to set up shop here instead of in Toronto, or a dentist on Quarry Ridge to add more chairs to her practice – all of these actions create jobs. We need to identify and remove barriers to business expansion, where appropriate – this means listening to businesses and improving our processes to be more responsive and supportive.

And I can tell you that the cities that prosper in the new economy all have one thing in common – a powerful partnership between post-secondary education and the business community. Training our workforce for today's economy and encouraging research and development here in Barrie – such as the Centre for Sustainable Technologies at Georgian College – is an essential part of economic

development. I am looking forward to working with the college and its university partners, particularly Laurentian University, to foster innovation, creativity, and prosperity in Barrie.

The third great project for the next four years will be building a new relationship between City Council, and the people who elected us. We must open up City Hall to residents – get them involved in decisions earlier, get out into neighbourhoods to understand local issues, and use new ways of reaching people to ensure that we truly live the motto, the People are the City. These changes are not difficult to make – they don't require studies or months of planning – they just require a commitment to democracy and the will to do things differently.

I intend to deliver on this promise right away. In the coming weeks, I will be making a series of recommendations for substantial changes to the way Council and committees operate. There are currently 26 separate Committees that handle various functions for the City. Some of these overlap and some have become ineffective. Of these 26 committees, I will be recommending changes to 17 of them, streamlining some, winding some of them up, and expanding citizen involvement in others. This will make them more efficient, but most importantly, much more inclusive and open to the public. It's time for a real commitment to involving the citizens of Barrie in the decisions that we make.

These three projects – and many others - will need to be accomplished while maintaining the essential responsibilities of City Council. Make sure we remain a safe city, by ensuring our police, fire, and emergency services have the tools they need to do the job, and by taking action to improve road safety. Practice fiscal responsibility by finding efficiencies at City Hall, keeping taxes low, while making responsible decisions about our financial future. Our financial situation is not strong – we will need to make very tough choices in the coming years.

And with these concerns in mind, I believe we need to govern by asking a simple question – how have we helped people with our actions? Have we considered those who are struggling with daily life in Barrie, whether seniors, families, or young people? I remember very well one of the messages given to the incoming Council on inauguration night in 2006 – that a society is judged by how it treats its least fortunate. We will never be able to solve all problems or help all those in need, but if we can do a little bit more, every year, we can make a difference.

In closing, I want to say on a personal note – my family is one of the reasons I ran for Mayor. I want to shape a city for my daughter that will offer her every opportunity in life. I want to build on what makes Barrie great today—the spirit of a small town, the opportunity of the city. We are a community with all the ingredients for unparalleled prosperity and quality of life, set like a sparkling jewel at the end of Kempenfelt Bay. This can be a place where the next generation finds everything they need to live a full and fulfilling life, and that must be our ultimate goal, one that we as Council must pursue with the same energy and optimism as those who came before us and built this great city.

Is tonight a watershed? I believe it can be. But it will require a Council with foresight, vision, energy, and political guts. We will not change the world overnight. But four years from now I believe we will look back and say that when the people of Barrie chose change in October 2010, their Council delivered it. And Barrie will be that much better for it.

Our challenge is to govern with purpose and vision. A stronger city is out there for us. Let's go get it.

Thank you.