



INAUGURAL REMARKS

by

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Good Morning and welcome to the 172nd year of meeting as Hastings County Council. Let me also offer a warm welcome to our friends and families assembled here, our distinguished guests, who will be properly introduced a little later, and to those viewing this on our live stream.

One hundred and seventy two years ago I think the word 'stream' had a very different connotation....

I know that I speak on behalf of all my colleagues on Council that we look forward to the next four years of service to the people and businesses of our great County.

Let me start by extending my gratitude to Judge Scott for once again joining us here in chambers to conduct the swearing in. We know how busy you are! Your presence makes this day very special! Thank you.

And to Councillor O'Neill, thank you for putting your name forward for the Warden's position. It reflects your commitment to the County.

To all the members of County Council, I appreciate your support to take on the Warden's role. There is no doubt that it will be a big challenge, especially following in past Warden Phillips' footsteps! Rick you have set the bar high and for that we are most grateful!!

I would like to acknowledge the diligence and hard work of all the members of the most recent County Council. None of us would have dreamed of having to live and work through a pandemic of such proportions when we started our last term. COVID-19 changed everything for us and yet it also made us realize the incredible value of the services we provide here at the County and of course in our home

communities. I believe, that together, we did everything we could during the height of the pandemic to support people and our communities.

Unfortunately, I think it is too early to say that the pandemic is firmly in our rear-view mirror. As we exit off the pandemic highway, we are going to have to turn our attention to the future and I expect the next few years will continue to be challenging.

Whether it's the supply of safe, affordable housing for many that cannot afford homeownership, the increasing demands on our paramedic services as a result of an aging population, coupled with new population growth, or ensuring our long-term care facilities are adequately funded, we will need to work together as a group and with others like the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario to try and find the ways to tackle these and other pressing and complicated issues.

Let me use housing as an example to illustrate this. Everyone agrees, I believe, that helping to reduce or end homelessness depends upon having safe, affordable accommodations in which to house people. It is a supply problem first and foremost. Our own waitlist for housing has grown to more than 2,800 applications. Many of those on the list are waiting an average of 4-5 years and in some categories it's as high as 10 years to get housed.

This situation also plays itself out across eastern Ontario. There are literally thousands of applications that are languishing because of the lack of supply of affordable, rent-geared-to-income units. In the last few months however, the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus has come together to develop a bold, transformative plan to try and take a major bite out of the supply problem. It is

working towards a strategy to see seven thousand (7,000) affordable new rental units constructed over the next seven years to house people across our region and here in Hastings County. And by using a mixed public-private sector construction model, the EOWC believes that it would leverage a total of approximately 30,000 new rental units. This would indeed be transformative!

This is a multi-billion dollar plan that will require all levels of government and the private sector support, but it is doable. The EOWC through the Eastern Ontario Regional Network has shown its ability to develop and deliver large regional projects. Tackling this portion of the housing supply crisis is something well suited to a regional approach and I hope that County Council, when the time comes, will give its full support to the project. So, stay tuned!

While the EOWC's "7 in 7" project offers a good measure of long-term improvement we will need to continue to focus on our daily efforts to reduce homelessness by implementing meaningful programs. To do that, the County will work, as we have in the past, with local partners that have demonstrated the ability to help assist individuals in finding long term housing solutions.

When it comes to paramedic services, I think we are all justifiably proud of the women and men who, day in and day out are responding to an ever-increasing volume of calls. They are doing the very best that they can, but we need to acknowledge the pressures of the service. As our population in the cities, our County and in Prince Edward County both ages and grows in numbers, we need to be able to keep up to the demand for services.

This twin phenomenon of a growing population in raw numbers, coupled with aging is something relatively new to our situation. I know Chief Bowker and

County staff are going to be working on ways to deal with the pressure on our existing service. I also expect the joint committee will be coming back to County Council this year with some recommendations to help guide the way forward.

Over the more than 100 years that Hastings County has been providing Long-term Care services to its residents in its two Homes, we have always tried to do it with a resident focus. In the last term of Council, the joint Long-term Care Committee took bold action to recommend additional financial investments in our operations to support the move to four hours of care per resident per day. County Council supported those recommendations fully. I am sure that continued advocacy to the province for adequate funding for our operations will be needed and I know that the joint committee will lead that effort. We will be there to support them once again!

These are just a few of the issues that will need to be dealt with in the coming term of Council. There will be many more, but I am confident that working together as a team alongside our partners in Belleville, Quinte West, Prince Edward County and among our 14 local members we will rise to the challenge!

Thank you.