

Mayor Morden's Inaugural Address

First, I would like to acknowledge our families, friends and guests, including the Kwantlen First Nation and Katzie First Nation whose traditional territory we stand on.

Thank you to all the hardworking volunteers who dedicated so much of their time on the various campaigns and to the families that supported them. Thank you to all those who put their names forward to serve our city, and congratulations to all those elected.

From the outset of my campaign, we set the theme as one of respect and commitment. On the doorsteps of your homes and businesses we asked and listened to what matters most to you. You made it clear you wanted a safe community, the end of tent city and advocacy with senior government for our needs, great recreation, a vibrant downtown, a strong local economy and an open and honest local government that listens to you and takes action for the will of the people.

I am truly humbled by the electorate who not only delivered a strong message, but also gave us a diverse group of Councillors to represent the people.

We have a lot of experience at our new Council table: past Mayor and Councillor Gordy Robson, incumbent Councillor Kiersten Duncan and past multiple term Councillor Judy Dueck. I have been honoured to serve two terms as Councillor.

And we have new strong voices in Councillors Ahmed Yousef, Chelsea Meadus and Ryan Svendsen.

I want to thank the previous Council. We have established a smooth transition from one watch to another and I would like to take a moment to honour their service – something I will endeavour to make a tradition.

I would like to invite Dr. Masse and Mr. Speirs forward.

<Mayor Morden presents a special photo gift>

Mayor Read, Mr. Shymkiw and Ms. Bell send their regrets, but Ms. Bell is with us via live stream from LA. Thank you for your service.

I would like to invite Councillors Gordy Robson and Kiersten Duncan forward. You both continue to serve, and the new Council would like to recognize you for your service to the community.

<Mayor Morden presents a special photo gift>

The election is over. The voters have spoken, and with that, comes a tremendous sense of responsibility. Now it is time to get to the work of the people.

Maple Ridge was incorporated in 1874, is 100 square miles, and currently has over 82,000 citizens. Our city is 144 years old, and it's important to realize our role is to govern upon the foundations laid by our predecessors. In these chambers and in the hallways you'll see photographs of those elected to serve our community in the past. Those first few leaders would not recognize the City they incorporated.

Over the next four years, the seven of us are committed to engaging with the community to deal with the challenges and opportunity in our City. Our broad goal is to be informed, to collaborate and build consensus on the issues a growing City faces.

From this day forward the seven of us represent every citizen of Maple Ridge, whether you voted for us or not. That's how democracy works in Canada. And that's our commitment to you. To do the very best we can for the whole community.

I had the opportunity to sit with Maple Ridge CAO Paul Gill the day after the election and chat. We talked about the importance of moving forward from the angst and rhetoric of the campaign. We talked at length about responsibility, accountability, respect, listening to differences in opinion, the role of staff and role of Council to govern and the need for open public consultation for the people we serve.

I have taken this tone to every meeting I've had since the election. Our MP, MLA's, Mayor of Pitt Meadows, our regional airport, the RCMP, transition meetings with our Mayor and Councillors as well numerous staff meetings to get me up to speed on City business.

Your new Council has been through an orientation, workshops on governance and procedure and have had lengthy discussions on how we're going to conduct business. Out of that work

a code of conduct centred in respect has been drafted to be brought forward as an agenda item at our November 13 Council meeting.

Our next priority is strategic planning before the year is out. Proper planning allows us to deliver maximum performance.

We aren't a small city anymore and with that comes urban problems. The truth is we have a serious drug problem, a tent city that must come to an end, but we must be mindful of the fact that people are dealing with physical and mental health problems as well persons who find themselves at risk or without a home. Some of these problems are the role of senior government, and some are that of local government.

We will advocate with senior government to get people the help they need. Everything from transportation, to seniors and affordable housing, health care, particularly detox, treatment and long-term recovery programs.

Locally we have a lot of work to do. We will get the crime problem under control by working with our police, bylaws, our BIA and private security as well as use programs that we can initiate in tandem such as restorative justice, diversion and examination of a community court. We are committed to deliver a safe community.

We have a very small commercial tax base comprised of all types. We will support them and work to build upon them, particularly in our downtown that will grow by another ten thousand people over the next decade. Given the retail landscape we need to go through a public visioning process to ensure our core develops a clear identity and attracts investment that will deliver new business, jobs, entertainment and services.

We will build the needed infrastructure for our future, the amenities we want such as great recreation and a strong local economy to provide us jobs to help pay the bills. There will always be taxes, our job is to ensure we raise income, invest sensibly and spend your money wisely; the overarching goal is to reduce the burden on homeowners.

The fact is that we live in Metro Vancouver, which is expensive. It must be acknowledged that many families struggle from day to day to make it all work. Working together in an honest and understanding light, we will be able to solve problems.

While Maple Ridge has challenges, it also has many opportunities. We are a special community. We have many amazing, dedicated and compassionate people. We live in beautiful surroundings, love our natural environment, enjoy tourism and have a vibrant arts community.

We have diverse housing choices in our rural and urban areas. 30% of our population volunteer. We have many great non-profit and service organizations dedicated to building strong social fabric.

This Council will be builders of commerce and jobs, of community infrastructure, roads and sports facilities, but equally as important, builders of a safe and connected community.

A wise mentor of mine noted early at the start of my political service the following:

In the words of Winston Churchill *"You'll never reach your destination if you stop and throw stones at every dog that barks."*

Let us all come together and participate in shaping the future we all want. Together we can, unified we will, with a Council that listens and acts for the will of the people. It is time to seize our opportunity and build a strong and united city.

With a clear public mandate it is now time to deliver on our commitment and get the job done.