

Good evening...and thank you Todd for your introduction.

It is with a tremendous sense of humility, anticipation and determination that I stand before you tonight as the Mayor of Vaughan.

I want to begin by expressing my deepest gratitude to my family.

My parents, Margaret and Benny, who chose to move to this wonderful community 36 years ago...

Two people who left their respective homelands of Italy and Scotland and settled in Canada. Meeting here, falling in love here, getting married, starting a family and building a beautiful life here.

Mom, Dad – thank you for your unconditional love and unwavering support – it means everything to me.

To my gorgeous wife and the love of my life Utilia, and to our two absolutely amazing daughters Talia and Grace.

You are my everything and I love you with all of my heart. Thank you, Utilia, for saying yes when I asked, and thank you Talia and Grace for always inspiring me.

To my sister Lorraine and my brothers Mark and Michael – thank you for always having my back and pushing me to achieve.

To my siblings-in-law Walter, Nicole and Amanda and my nieces and nephews Alessandra, Jacob, Jennifer, Emily, Sarah, Benjamin and Alexander – thank you for bringing so much joy into my life, and for helping to keep me grounded.

To my new Council colleagues, congratulations.

Over the next four years, I have no doubt that we will work together to fulfill our shared commitment to Vaughan residents, who I know we are extremely proud to represent here in this Chamber.

As I glance to my left and right, I see new and returning Councillors, each with a wealth of experience and an eagerness to get to work writing the next great chapter of our City's story.

The ideas, perspectives and voices of every Member of Council are critical to achieving positive results for our residents.

I am excited to work with each of you, as well as with our City Manager Nick Spensieri, the Senior Leadership Team, and all of the staff in our City Administration – an incredible and professional group of public servants who do our community proud, day-in and day-out.

This evening's inauguration represents an opportunity for us all to look forward to our exciting future.

But it is equally important for us to reflect on how far we've come and to acknowledge an outstanding city builder upon whose shoulders we now stand.

A visionary who saw our city not for what it was but for what it could be, and then set out to make that vision real.

I'm referring, of course, to Maurizio Bevilacqua...an individual who served our community with integrity and distinction for 34 years.

I thank Mayor Bevilacqua for his unwavering commitment to the City of Vaughan and for his relentless pursuit of progress.

His eloquence, his generosity and his stewardship will be missed here in this Chamber but his remarkable legacy of achievement will endure, and will be built upon by this new Council.

Thank you Mayor Bevilacqua, for everything.

And I would also like to thank our departing Council colleagues. Collectively, they spent decades working to make this city a better place: Tony Carella, Alan Shefman and Sandra Yeung Racco.

Thank you for all that you've done for this community.

Now during the course of the election campaign that concluded on October 24<sup>th</sup>, I highlighted a series of priorities that form the basis of what I want us to deliver for our residents.

Our people truly love this city, and so do I.

Our quality of life and standard of living are second to none.

We are inclusive and diverse.

And we have become one of the most important economic engines for this region, this province and, in fact, this country.

We have every reason to be proud of what's been accomplished in our recent history.

But past achievements do not guarantee future success.

And standing still is not an option.

For example, our economy cannot continue to thrive when people and goods are stuck in traffic.

Fixing the gridlock that chokes our roads will require an all-hands-on-deck effort from this council, working in partnership with our York Region neighbours and all levels of government.

Delivering transformational public transit projects like the Yonge North Subway Extension and additional GO Train service on existing and new rail corridors is key.

At the same time, we need to strengthen our east-west road connections on Teston, Kirby and Langstaff so we can really Get Vaughan Moving!

Building a comprehensive and agile transportation network will be even more critical in the years ahead because we know that our community will continue to grow at a rapid pace.

Recent immigration targets set by the federal government and housing targets set by the province make it crystal clear that Vaughan will be required to absorb tens of thousands of new residents over the next number of years.

I see this as a remarkable social and economic opportunity for us, but we need to be prepared.

We have the ingenuity and creativity in this city to tackle the housing affordability crisis by getting shovels in the ground while simultaneously respecting existing residents and the dynamic neighbourhoods that we already have, and while preserving our green space.

With robust community consultation and open communication, I believe that Vaughan can become a model for how to get this done the right way and I am eager to take on this challenge working alongside our new Council.

In addition to these priorities, it is important for us to continue making progress on the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre, the North Maple Regional Park, the York University Medical School and so much more.

To date, we have had success advancing these and other city-building initiatives by creating a series of Task Forces that are mandated to focus on achieving results.

In the coming days, we will announce a new round of Task Forces that reflect the shared priorities for our next term of Council.

With my remaining time at the podium this evening, I want to move away from specific initiatives and projects and talk instead about the values that are at the foundation of the work that lies ahead.

There's an old expression that I'm sure you've heard that says: "may you live in interesting times" and we certainly do.

These past couple of years of grappling with a global pandemic have been exceedingly difficult for so many.

Lives tragically lost, families shattered, businesses closed.

Social isolation, mental health challenges, information overload, fatigue.

All of it has taken a toll on all of us.

And let there be no doubt, it has taken a toll on our democracy – the way we view traditional forms of authority – in other words, the relationship between the government and the governed.

I am an optimist by nature, but it has increasingly felt to me as if parts of the social fabric that took generations to weave have begun to fray.

I'm not here to lay blame or to pick one side over the other and I am a passionate defender of vigorous debate and discussion.

But I am also of the belief that we, here in Vaughan and beyond, are stronger when we are united and working together towards a common goal.

I am reminded of this poignant line from a speech delivered by John F. Kennedy in which he said:

"So let us not be blind to our differences – but let us also direct attention to our common interests and to the means by which those differences can be resolved. And if we cannot end now our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity. For, in the final analysis, our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal."

As your new Mayor, I am hopeful that we are set to enter a period of healing in the aftermath of this challenging time.

A time when we can summon the humanity to be kind to each other. To go easy on each other.

To listen to each other rather than yell past each another.

To emphasize that which unites us rather than divides us.

To understand that we can disagree without being disagreeable.

And to willingly embrace a tone and a tenor, in our words and in our deeds, that is respectful and honourable.

This appeal to the better angels of our nature is at the heart of the language contained in the Vaughan Accord.

This unity of purpose is at the foundation of our City's recent success and it will be essential to our future achievement.

And this determination to rise above narrow self-interest and focus instead on community and fellowship will give Vaughan it's very best chance to shine.

Thank you for this honour – I won't let you down.

*\*Check against delivery\**