



***Success in the City  
An Address by  
The Honourable  
Maurizio Bevilacqua  
Mayor, City of Vaughan  
to the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce  
January 25, 2012***

I want to first of all thank you Deborah for your every generous and heartfelt introduction.

I very much enjoy working with you and the members of the Chamber of Commerce. You and Michael as well as your entire team deserve our respect and gratitude for the exceptional work that you do on behalf of the business community here in the City of Vaughan.

This is indeed, I would say, an amazing turnout and it speaks to the great capacity of the Chamber of Commerce organize hundreds of people to attend a Mayor's luncheon.

Over 450 people in attendance. This is absolutely a great showing of support for the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce.

I want to share a story about your president Deborah and I. Last time she came in to the office at City Hall she asked me a few questions, how has your term been so far? How is it being Mayor? How is Council? Are you very busy? Are you enjoying it?

Fifteen months later to the day I am still enjoying it.

I was grateful for her questions because it made me reflect on the issues and events that occurred with the citizens of Vaughan and indeed with Council.

Before I go any further in my remarks I want the people in this room to understand very clearly that City Council is a team, we work together, we share the load, we share the successes and we also share when things don't go the way they should. In that case the buck stops with me but I can tell you that these Councillors have, in many different ways, impressed me a great deal over the past 15 months and I'm very, very grateful for

their support and for the love that they express each and every day for this great City of ours.

You know as Deb asked me a question, she forced me to actually sit down and write a few of the thoughts that I felt and the issues that I dealt with and I'm very grateful for that because it reminds of the very first thing that we did and that was inauguration day.

- Inauguration day we opened the doors to every single community member who wanted to come. That was a big change from the past.
- We signed the Vaughan Accord and what's really important is that, not just signing the document, but also living the document, day in and day out.
- We froze the salaries of Councillors
- We approved I think a very responsible budget of 1.9%
- We became a City of 300,000
- We celebrated our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary
- We hosted a number of international delegations and professional organizations
- The City has become more visible with national organizations like the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario
- We implemented Program Review which is a line-by-line analysis of the budget in a very responsible way
- We hired two phenomenal Commissioners that are key to the future of this City, John MacKenzie and Paul Jankowski, Commissioners of Planning and Engineering. This is all happening within a very short span of time.
- We officially opened our new City Hall and paid tribute to Lorna Jackson
- We revised our Official Plan
- We approved a new design review panel
- We have won economic development awards
- We launched corporate review
- We streamlined our committee system
- We travelled to China to successfully promote our City
- And yes, the spirit of generosity, we've raised over \$650,000 to help organizations, needy organizations, in our City that depend on our spirit of generosity to go forward.

This is just part of the list. This is not all that we have done. We have done much more than that. And the reason why we were able to achieve that is because this Council enjoys the support of the 300,000 citizens that live in this great City of ours.

And so to all of them I want to express my warmest and sincerest gratitude for helping us make a difference to this great City. It has been a very meaningful and productive

experience. And when I think of the words productive and meaningful, I think of the people here in this hall – namely you – who, day in and day out make a difference to the life of our City.

You talented men and women of great skill who through their hard work, dedication and commitment, create and expand opportunities for us all.

You are driven by an inner desire to excel, to create, to innovate and as a result create jobs and economic growth for our City.

To all of you, to all of you who risk your capital, who invest your time and energy, who are willing to get out of your comfort zone and challenge yourselves and your competitors for the ultimate prize of bringing about the best products and services to market, I sincerely salute you.

Your perseverance and desire to succeed, not just for yourselves but for the well-being of the entire community, speaks to the integrity and dignity of your cause.

Make no mistake about it. The Vaughan business community is an enlightened corporate community that understands the critical role it plays in the economic, social and cultural development of our City.

As your Mayor, I have visited your plants, I have visited your stores, your construction yards, and labs.

I've seen the pride you feel when you showcase your products, when you win greater market share. When one of your employees excels, when your productivity rises or when you provide services that are appreciated and valued by your clients.

Over the past year I have been at many official openings.

- I've helped you open yoga studios and flower shops
- Manufacturing plants and medical centres
- Printing shops and hair salons
- Green technology industries and restaurants
- Clothing stores and car dealerships
- Bakeries and banks
- Hotels and Funeral Homes
- Educational institutions and major condo developments at the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre with the Cortel Group

Every single opening for me is a celebration of our City's entrepreneurial spirit.

In every instance jobs were created and dreams realized. In every instance, hope and optimism reigned.

All this to say, that I know who you are. I know who you are; I know how hard you work, how much you care and how much you give to this City.

Today I want to have a frank discussion about our future.

As well I want to make my case as to the reason why I believe that you should be optimistic and hopeful.

Let me begin by spending a couple of minutes by discussing the broader, macro picture of the Canadian economy, where we reside as citizens of Vaughan.

While the US, European and other economies struggle, thanks to some disciplined and focused decisions made by the federal government in the mid 90's, which resulted in the elimination of the deficit, paying down the debt, reduction of personal and corporate taxes and a low interest rate policy, Canada was able to withstand the economic shocks brought upon by changing economic dynamics of our global economy.

Today not only is Canada the country that was able to recover all the jobs that were lost during the recent global recession, but you have international organizations like the International Monetary Fund and the OECD giving Canada very high grades and stating that we have one of the strongest economies in the world.

What is also interesting about the Canadian economy is that since the recession to today, nine out of 10 jobs that have been created since July 2009 have been full-time jobs. Which means that although there has been economic volatility because of a number of issues which we are dealing with, including the crisis in Europe, the Canadian economy has been insulated from these global trends.

When you look at the debt to GDP ratio, we are well below our G-7 counterparts.

As well, our nation's commitment to competitive taxes has helped our country to maintain a very strong and vibrant economy.

Recently Forbes Magazine ranked Canada number one as the best country to do business.

As well, as a former Minister of State responsible for International Financial Institutions, I am very proud that Canada's banking system has been ranked the best in the world for the past four years by the World Economic Forum.

Let me further strengthen my case for hope and optimism.

Moody's, Fitch and Standard and Poor's have all renewed our nation's triple-A credit rating and they've used words like superior and resilient when referring to our economy.

I am making this point in this room at this time with the backdrop that I am beginning to see emerging in the press where more and more people are talking negatively about our economy. I want to provide you with the facts that I think speak to a different reality. The reality that I want people in the City of Vaughan to believe in, that we have a strong economy, that our future looks bright, that job creation can occur, that economic growth can occur, that if we roll up our sleeves, innovate and enhance our productivity, we can do exceptionally well as a City and as a country.

Negative reporting of the economy consistently can affect the psyche of consumers and businesses. You all know about that. I think you need to join me in making sure that that message of hope and opportunity, that the right facts are spoken in every board room in the City, that people understand that there is a very strong and vibrant economy here locally.

I see it every day, I'm around. I've done over 450 events as Mayor in my first year in office. Joined by my Council whenever they can, wherever they can be, to recognize that we have to do missionary work here. We cannot be tempted or lured into a state of negative thinking about our economy. It's just not on in our City.

We have far too many blessings in our City to throw up our arms in despair and say there's nothing we can do. Yes we can. We can do it. We can do a lot. We can do a lot to provide hope to our young people and we can do a great deal to spur on the type of further economic growth that will make the local economy even stronger.

We have, I believe, the stability that this country needs to move forward confidently. So that is really our national picture. And I believe it's very impressive when you compare it with the rest of the world.

Now imagine that within that reality that I've just described there is a gem called the City of Vaughan, where the numbers are even better than the national numbers.

By nature I am an optimistic person, but I'm also very grounded in statistics and things that matter to real people. And I say to you that I want people to remember these questions that I always ask at every opportunity I get when we're doubting the resiliency of our local economy, when we're doubting the resiliency of our City, I want you to ask within yourself the questions that I often speak to you about and that is, look at our blessings, look at what natural advantages we were given as a City. Advantages that many, many other cities and towns throughout this country and indeed in North America and may I say, in the entire world, don't have. They would love to be right here, situated in Vaughan.

How many cities can claim to be within a 10 minute drive of the country's busiest airport?

Or say that they had a market very close by, within a day's drive, of 155 million people? Not 10 million, not 20 million, 155 million people.

How many cities can say that they not only have excellent highway accessibility with the 407, 400 and 427, but have a Council and the political leadership that wants to extend the 427 to better serve the economy, the local economy?

How many cities can claim in a world that is dictated by the reality of a global village, how many cities can claim 70 different languages being spoken in a city of 300,000? That is a human resources advantage that we must capitalize on.

Or what about the fact that here in the City of Vaughan one-third of the people have a post-secondary education?

How many cities and towns in the GTA can claim to consistently have one of the lowest property taxes while providing high quality service to residents?

And this I want to pay tribute to the administration as well as Council, how many cities our size can claim to have close to 200 million dollars in reserves, giving our City the financial stability to withstand economic downturns and putting the City in a better position to address such issues as infrastructure replacement and repair?

These are questions we need to ask ourselves.

How many cities our size surpassed the one billion dollar mark in building permits, not for one year, not for two years, but for six years?

And how many cities can claim to be part of the safest region in Canada?

How many cities can say they are the continental gateway for distribution, we have CN's largest classification yards and CP's largest intermodal are located here?

We have many, many reasons to be hopeful and optimistic but make no mistake about it, we cannot become complacent.

We need to capitalize on our competitive advantages and continue to thrive.

That is why we always focus and take actions that support the 10 important features that make a successful city. And they are:

- Strong economy
- Well educated workforce
- Vibrant city centre
- Attractive and successful neighbourhoods
- Healthy population
- Low crime
- Good transportation systems
- Culture
- Cosmopolitan and inclusive
- Well run, sustainable and respected beyond its borders.

Every day and in every way when I get up I look at this list. And every little step we make towards improving any of those 10 points is a step in the right direction. Every little step.

It's just like when the Ontario government approved our hospital; we got stage two, small step but a step in the right direction. And with patience, with understanding, with focus, we will get that hospital in this City, because this City is deserving of a hospital. And Council I know we will be there every step of the way to turn that dream into a reality.

Our Council is really anchored to the values of character and integrity demonstrated through responsible sustainable planning and economic leadership. We are rooted in transparency and accountability and respect for the hard-earned taxpayer's dollars and that has been demonstrated by every single member's signature on the Vaughan Accord and the implementation of Program Review and the administration lead in the Corporate Review.

Council is determined to achieve the full potential of our City.

Our future includes a population of 416,000 people and employment growth exceeding 100,000.

We are a serious City who will make the investments required to achieve those goals. But we can't do it on our own.

The business community is really the driving force behind the creation of wealth in this City. You have done extremely well. The only reason why I can get up as the Mayor of this City and give such a great review on our activities is because the business community is actually here every step of the way generating the jobs, spurring on economic growth in partnership with various levels of government to provide the very best standard of living and quality of life that the citizens of Vaughan deserve.

We have many, many projects in front of us. We have the hospital, we have the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre, we're introducing a culture of sustainability in this City. But we have grown; we have grown a great deal in 15 months. We have seen a dramatic change in attitude. We have seen a major change in the way we see ourselves and that is a tribute to the 300,000 people who live in this City, who a year ago or so called for change.

Change is here but the journey is a very long one.

I'm committed to bring about the type of changes required so that we can fulfill the promise of this great City. I know that Council collectively cares about the fulfillment of the promise of this great City. But we need your partnership every step of the way and we want to be your partners.

I've enjoyed a great relationship with the Chamber and the business community because I understand the challenges you face and I understand how we can, in fact, work together. Like your business, city building is work in progress. And remember, I always remind myself of this, that success comes before work only in the dictionary.

We need to work together to fulfill the promise of our City, we need to channel our energies towards our ultimate goal which is to build the best City we possibly can. Let us be partners in this great mission that started with a desire for change, a spirit of change that is the embodiment of our belief that we can do better. I know we can. I know we will. Thank you.



