

It is indeed an honour to present to you City Council's 2010 State of the City address. In a simple word, we submit to you that the state of our city is *good*.

We are seeing signs that the global economic downturn is stabilizing and we believe the turnaround could commence sometime in 2010. The tri-level stimulus funding was intended to jump-start the economy, restore confidence, and have the economy build up a natural momentum. It's still too early to tell whether that all happened, but we're optimistic. We do know that not all the stimulus funds have been spent, and as our projects develop throughout this summer and fall, we expect them to continue to fuel our local economy.

It is widely acknowledged that North Bay did not feel the full force of the recession. For those who did lose their jobs, we feel your pain. We will continue to do everything a municipality can do to create a positive environment for employers, and help people find work.

North Bay saw an unprecedented construction season in 2009 – one that put many men and women to work. At the beginning of last year, we were very active with local and national developers, convincing them that even though they've seen a pull-back in other communities, North Bay, with its strong and diverse economy, would be the anomaly. We convinced them not to change their plans; to go ahead with their projects. So we saw the Hampton Inn, Shoppers Drug Mart, TD Bank, and Goodlife go ahead with their projects. Not only did that mean construction jobs for hundreds of people, but the new Hampton has hired dozens of employees and the Shoppers, which opened this past weekend, has 45 new employees.

Nipissing University and Canadore College, in addition to providing a stable workforce as our largest employers, also contributed to a successful year by breaking ground on a \$25 million building; the Learning Library. Again, not only does the construction help with immediate employment, but the former library was the weak link in their recruitment chain, and when that is fixed, they expect more students, which means more hiring, and the upward cycle continues. Most people don't realize that the Education Centre has grown to over 7,000 students. This is certainly one of the great success stories of our city.

Social housing was another area of growth and the cities in the region took a leadership role. While social housing is the purview of the Federal and Provincial governments, our area cities made a one-time strategic investment during these extraordinary economic times. In North Bay we now see the 55-unit Cassellholme site well underway, and the 12 units on Trout Lake Road are opening this month.

In all, we saw \$92,500,000 invested in new buildings last year – an all-time record. This surpassed the record in 2007 of \$77.6 million, and the record in 2008 of \$84.4 million.

This is an outstanding level of confidence in our community, and one that we should all be very proud of. However, it will be difficult to sustain this level of growth, as we wait for the rest of the country to catch up to us. In addition, we need to continue to invest in our infrastructure so that services are in place for the next round of development.

With that said, it is important to note that when you elected this government, our City was spending about \$17 million each year on sewer, water, roads, and capital. Last year we budgeted \$49 million, which included a one-time investment of \$11 million to resurface the Airport runway. This year, our budget will be similar, and we will invest \$38 million into our infrastructure.

One of the major investments was at our waterfront. In 1928, only a few short decades after the Canadian Pacific Railway found its way to North Bay, the community contemplated getting to the waterfront over or under these tracks. Eighty-one years later, we cut the ribbon of a \$7 million underpass; the link between our vibrant downtown and the Historic Waterfront District.

Another major investment was our Outdoor Sports Complex. From the day the shovels broke ground, they haven't stopped working at the site. This \$9 million investment will not only satisfy our local demand for sports fields, but will help attract tournaments that will fill our hotel rooms and restaurants.

There certainly were a lot of lights, cameras, and action in North Bay last year. Three significant movie productions made us their home base, including *Death Comes to Town*, the highly-anticipated reunion series of *Kids in the Hall*, which airs tomorrow night; *Oliver Sherman*, and *Dark*

Rising 2. We have a Draft Film Policy which really helps open up our City to the movie industry, and we are working to attract several new projects to the area.

We also recognized that due to the economic downturn, there was capacity at many of our machine shops and fabricators. We partnered in a Western Canada Initiative, which provides a matchmaking program for firms throughout Northern Ontario to supply goods and services to the Oil-Sands and Potash sectors out west. We feel this is an opportunity to leverage additional work and ultimately expand local operations and employment levels to meet increased production demand.

In the tourism sector we branched out into a couple of new ventures. We had a week-long presence during the International Plowing Match and Rural Expo in Earlton. This was the first year that the event was held in Northern Ontario and attracted more than 80,000 people from around the world. In addition, Bike Trains Ontario chose North Bay as part of their program expansion and cyclists from Southern Ontario traveled in specially-crafted bike-carrying train cars to get to North Bay and ride our local trails. We understand we are a go for 2010 with an expanded schedule.

As a final nod to 2009 and a lead in to 2010, we vastly expanded our Immigration programs. Just today we launched our Immigration Web Portal at NorthBayImmigration.ca. This portal will play an essential role in assisting individuals during every stage of the immigration process. People may ask why we care so much about immigration. Here at City Hall we have at least 5 senior staff leaving this year. It's the same story at Canadore College, Ontario Northland, MTO, and most employers throughout the city. The baby-boomers are retiring at an alarming rate, and between this year and 2014, there will be thousands gone from the workforce. While there's higher unemployment today, it's hard to appreciate all companies will be hard-pressed to find people to fill those jobs tomorrow. We'll look to attract many former North Bay-ites to come home, but immigration will be another powerful tool to fill the job requirements that are coming. Just look at our own Hospital. They will be hiring 300 people to fill vacancies by the time they move into their new building at this time next year. That includes 100 nurses and nurse practitioners, and they're eager to fill those particular spots right away.

That's been a pretty good summary of what took place in North Bay last year. Now let's take a quick look at what we can expect for 2010.

As mentioned earlier, we will be investing \$38 million in sewer, water, roads, and capital this year. Much will be directed to the completion of previously-started projects. The intersection of Highway 11 and McKeown Avenue will be finished up. Gormanville Road, with its middle turning lane and bike trail at one end, and round-about at the other, will be finished up. Both are very exciting projects that will allow for further expansion of that area. KIA will build a brand-new dealership and Toyota will refurbish the old Atlas Copco building into their new dealership. And you can expect a couple other commercial buildings to be constructed in that area as well. To be fair we must also mention that Mazda will refurbish the old No Frills building on Lakeshore Drive into their new dealership.

As you travel down Algonquin Avenue, get ready to see a boulevard of trees down the middle of the street, across from the Pro Cathedral. We're making a beautiful piazza-style entrance to the downtown, complete with fountain and brick walkways. This will really finish off the work we began in our whole downtown/waterfront revitalization plan.

Front Street is another major project. Now that Galt Street and 2nd Avenue have been realigned, we'll complete the Ann Street opening which will free up the final block of former CN rail land. We'll look to a developer to come in and build more homes, and continue the gentrification of the area.

We hope to receive funding to complete the commitment to the waterfront area with a \$9 million investment in the town square in front of the Museum, the parking lots, complete with curbing, lights, and landscaping, and basically wherever you see dirt today, we would blanket with grass and trees to complete the park-like setting. This would finish the City's investment and have the site ready to turn over to the Community Waterfront Friends to fundraise and implement their vision.

We also intend to pursue our Green Plan and complete our investment in our Methane facility at the landfill site. We have invested millions in capturing the methane that normally escapes into the Ozone layer and currently we flare it off. Now we are purchasing a massive generator that will burn the methane to generate electricity that we will sell to the Ontario grid. This is real environmental leadership that you've come to expect from this Council.

As we continue to bat cleanup in the environmental and engineering areas, the list includes the Water Treatment Plant, which will open very shortly. It's very late, but right on budget. We have been very careful in the construction of this building. Once we open it, we expect it to stay opened uninterrupted for the next 100 years. So it took a little longer to get it done, but it's done right.

Soon we will open our newly-expanded Recycling facility, which is a wonderful story. Instead of building a new building at great cost, we recycled the old building and we can now collect everything in our Blue Boxes that a new building would have allowed. In addition, our hazardous waste facility is now open 12 months of the year. And we expect to upgrade our street lights, replacing approximately 1/3 of the City's street lights with new energy efficient fixtures.

We really have taken a lead in conservation and environmental programs, and this will continue throughout 2010. Where we've been and where we're headed could take all night to tell. And that's the important part of the story. There *is* a lot going on in North Bay.

Our Council term is up this year. We have not sat on our hands looking around wondering "what happened?" Instead, we changed the face of the city, we led this community into the record books, we became *the* city in Northern Ontario, and we've put the pieces in place to keep North Bay at the top.

Happy New Year.