

Good evening Honourable Madam Justice Duchesneau-McLachlan, Reverend O'Connor, Councillors, members of the administration and staff, honoured guests, family and friends. Welcome.

We're privileged to sit before you today as your Mayor and Council, and to set out the framework that will guide us through the next 4 years.

First, welcome back to this chamber all the returning Councillors and our one new member. It's obvious that the citizens sent a clear message on election night that they wanted the entire team returned. They like the direction we took, and the voters have chosen us to continue to work as a team. They want us to make the difficult choices. And they want us to do so quickly, decisively, and together.

They do not want to see us bogged down in partisan politics and ideological debates. So we will deliver, because while we may have different political affiliations, we share the same faith – our belief in North Bay.

We have solidified the sense of optimism in the city, and we see that in every one of the statistics. But let us not forget that three years ago we heard on the campaign trail that it was time to accelerate positive change. We made sweeping changes in how we did business.

We promised to eliminate all pay for all agencies, boards, and commissions that we sit on. We delivered, saving over \$1 million to date and millions more in the future.

We promised to sell surplus City land. We delivered, after carefully considering the recommendations of our professional staff, who selected properties where in-filling would occur and where we already had municipal services. This environmentally-correct method of growth has generated over \$3 million in revenue and almost \$500,000 in annual taxes.

We promised to sell our industrial park for \$1/acre. We delivered, with a local non-profit agency making their first sale to Cementation, who are constructing a \$1 million building and getting ready to hire.

We promised to create a Grant Accessing Program and we delivered that as well, with the office garnering \$9.5 million in grants to date, with \$7 million more in the hopper.

Over the past 3 years we continued to build on the foundations of this great City and have made this the place to live as evidenced by the national media's recent announcement that North Bay is ranked in the top 50 cities to live in Canada.

This renewed confidence has encouraged people to make record investments in North Bay. They're investing in homes; 97 in our first year, 110 last year; 85 so far this year. They're investing in commercial and industrial expansions. Home Depot, Marina Point, JN Precise, Seymour Windows, G&P Welding, Metal Fab, Rahn Plastics, and Voyageur Airways, are a few that come to mind.

This confidence has encouraged the institutional sector to expand as well, with a new French Public High School opened, a new Elementary School under construction, and millions of dollars of upgrades underway for several other schools.

This adds up to almost a quarter billion dollars in building permits in our first term. This has brought real growth to the City for the first time in years, allowing us to continue to reduce tax increases, and to reduce the tax rate for the first time in decades.

But we still have 2 challenges ahead, to complete this financial transformation. We need to come to some resolution with the Federal Government for the Base deal. And we need to come to some resolution with the Provincial Government over the Ontario Municipal Partnership Funding. Both of these, if not resolved, have grave financial implications for this community.

The Base Deal, under its current form, will see the local taxpayers paying millions of dollars every year to Canada's military. The Federal Government's web site says the unique North Bay deal will save the military \$300 million over 20 years. If they're saving it – who's paying for it? Our estimates put our cost at a more reasonable \$20 million to \$80 million over 20 years, if you could imagine any of those numbers as being reasonable.

The Provincial deal calls for equity in transfer payments. We are asked by the Province to go out and perform Social Services, and they'll pay us back. This year they will mandate us to spend \$19 million, but will only pay us back \$16 million. The \$3 million shortfall is expected to be picked up by the local taxpayers, laying the blame at City Hall, and leaving the Province scot-free. This has to end, and you'll be hearing more from our Budget Chief about that very soon.

Those two deals are our most serious financial challenges this year. Not this term – they both need to be resolved this year. By solving today's fiscal problems, we can assure a strong future in the years ahead.

So if you're wondering what to expect for the next 4 years, we say to you – look at the success of the last 3 years, and expect more of the same.

We'll continue to be guided by our expert staff and administration.

We'll continue to see our thousands of volunteers come out in force to assist in providing a quality of life that is second to none.

We'll continue to invest even more money in our infrastructure.

We'll continue to look for new business opportunities for North Bay, especially in the high tech sector.

In a sentence, we'll continue to be open for business. And this isn't just a slogan; the actions of your Council continue to demonstrate to the world that we indeed are open for business and are seeking new investment opportunities.

We've started down a path – a path the voters' overwhelmingly approved of. We have faith in our City and its people. And the people have put us here because they have faith in us.

Together we will aim high. We were all elected to do no less.

Together we will succeed, and we will prove again that the voters were right.

Thank you very much.