

**Madame Clerk with your permission...**

**Thank you.**

**Members of Muskoka District, Municipal and Indigenous Councils, distinguished guests, Mr. Duben and Staff, ladies and gentlemen, family and friends, members of the media.**

**Good evening one and all, and thank you for coming, or for taking the time to join us on our webcasting platform.**

**To you Reverend, and Justice Wood, our sincere thanks to both of you for your role in this evening's festivities. Your presence and participation have added value to this evening's proceedings.**

**Ladies and gentlemen, tonight, and over the last week, we have gathered together to celebrate the inaugurations of the next generation of Muskoka's municipal leaders.**

**To you, members of Muskoka District Council, my personal congratulations to you all! With your oaths of office tonight, you have assumed your rightful place, and I am honored to join you.**

**As we commence our journey together, may we first give pause to remember all those who have served Muskoka and its community of communities before us. For their most recent efforts, I offer our collective thanks to:**

- former District Deputy Chair Lori-Lynn Giaschi- Pacini.**
  - Mayors Larry Braid, Paisley Donaldson, Don Furniss and Bob Young.**
  - and Councilors Shane Baker, Terry Pilger and Karen Terziano.**
- Their legacy is ours to honor... to respect... and to build upon.**

**So too, must we acknowledge that our Muskoka, is the traditional homeland of Indigenous peoples- which today include the Wahta Mohawk and Moose Deer Point Communities.**

**Indigenous peoples have always cared for this territory- to the benefit of future generations.**

**May we tonight, acknowledge their stewardship as one of our primary blessings!**

**Ladies and gentlemen, on October 22nd.... No, I stand corrected, on October 23<sup>rd</sup>, the people of Muskoka elected 22 individuals to serve as their District Council representatives.**

**14 of the 22 District Councilors sworn in this evening are returning Councilors.**

**8 of our members are new.**

**4 of Muskoka's Mayors are new to their roles, and 2 return.**

**5 of the eight new Councilors join us with previous municipal Council experience and,**

**3 members are entirely new to the process – A special welcome to Councilors Gordon, Jaglowicz and Koetsier. Gentlemen, would you rise and be recognized.**

**Council, each of you have been afforded the privilege of representing your respective communities.**

**So too, have you and I been bestowed the honor of representing all our communities.**

**Ours is a community that has a land mass of over 4700 square kms, only marginally smaller than the Province of Prince Edward Island, and having the same population as PEI when both our permanent and seasonal residents are counted.**

**A community with a world-renowned natural environment that includes:**

- 650 lakes that are over 8 hectares in size,**
- 38 Provincially significant wetlands,**
- And, a world renowned dark sky reserve.**

**Returning Councilors will know that together, we manage:**

- District Capital assets valued at just under a billion dollars, with a replacement cost of an estimated 2.6 billion dollars. Two thirds of said assets are deemed to be in the good to very good category.**
- We have 730 kms of Muskoka Roads**
- 52 bridges**
- 9 water treatment plants, 9 sewage treatment facilities and 9 hauled sewage lagoon sites.**
- These Pine Street offices and connected Provincial Offences courthouse, as well as to the south**
- the Pines long term care facility and McVittie Place- our Seniors Affordable housing building.**
- The Muskoka Airport, the Port Carling locks and five Paramedic facilities are further owned assets.**
- In addition, we have 574 housing units (468 of which are of the rent geared to income category)**

**- a state of the art new landfill site here in Bracebridge, as well as 10 waste transfer stations and 97 remote waste disposal bin sites spread strategically throughout Muskoka.**

**It is an exceptionally large and diversified portfolio.**

**New Councilors, you should know that you join an accomplished group of administrators. Supported by an exceptionally professional and dedicated staff, your returning Council colleagues have every reason to be proud of their achievements over the last several years.**

**They have delivered four fiscally prudent budgets, 3 of which were held to the level of the consumer price index.**

**Our two most recent budgets for 2017 and 2018 came in below the targets established by Council. A testament to new internal budget protocols established and instituted by CAO Duben and our Commissioners, most notably Treasurer Stevens.**

**The following highlights should be noted:**

**Our cash on hand has grown from \$11.5 million to \$17.4 million.**

**Debt is down 32 percent, from \$92.4 million to \$62.8 million.**

**And our corporate reserve funds have more than doubled from \$51.3 million to \$116.9 million.**

**We have also:**

- completed a comprehensive review of our Muskoka Official Plan**
- Invested in our airport's essential runway infrastructure to the tune of over \$5 million dollars. And also instituted a new skills-based Board of Directors, governance model, for Muskoka Airport.**

- **In partnership with the Town of Bracebridge, we have built a state-of-the art emergency services facility for our Paramedic operations and the Bracebridge Fire Department. Cleaning up a significant Brownfield site as part of the process.**
- **On the housing side the District itself has invested \$4.9 million dollars over the last four years supporting over 300 annual rent supplement agreements, facilitated 66 new affordable housing units, and through the new Gateway Homeownership program already provided 11 down payment housing ownership opportunities.**
- **Further, Provincial Housing programs, administered by the District, have in the last four years facilitated 72 down payment realities, 78 “Ontario Renovates” home repair projects, 18 new affordable rental units and an additional 55 annual monthly rent supplement agreements.**
- **Corporate greenhouse gas emission targets were achieved and a new position was approved to facilitate the hiring of a Climate Change specialist.**

**All this and more. A job well done!**

**Friends and neighbors, tonight, as we celebrate this District of Muskoka inauguration, so too must we be mindful and appreciative of the Council’s and administrators from each of our area municipalities- the Town of Bracebridge, The Township of Georgian Bay, The Towns of Gravenhurst and Huntsville, and the Townships of Lake of Bays and Muskoka Lakes.**

**As District Councilors, the group before you tonight will be tasked with policy and decision-making to the benefit of all of Muskoka.**

**Rest assured, however, that local determination and consultation, has, must, and will always, be a part of the deliberations in these chambers.**

**In addition, collectively we must be somewhat daring, and challenge ourselves to “think outside the box”- find ways to share services, facilities and resources. Be creative and find ways to avoid duplication.**

**To that end, Council, I encourage you to take time to get to know your fellow Councilors. Find time to attend one of their Council Meetings or attend one of their community events. Your knowledge of all Muskoka’s communities will serve you well as we move forward.**

**To the four new mayors among us, I encourage you to leverage my experience, or that of both Mayor Aitchison and Mayor Smith. Or if you prefer, one of those who have preceded you in your role.**

**To you and all Councilors, leverage too the expertise and experience of our CAOs, and respective municipal staff, as well as so many others throughout our communities, all of whom will most graciously be willing to help.**

**Ours is not an “I” or “me” business, but a “we” business!**

**Let us move forward tonight honoring the expectations of our electorate. May we aspire to conduct our business in a respectful and dignified manner.**

**Let us also strive for excellence in customer service, consultation and communication and treat all of our constituents not as mere taxpayers but as shareholders.**

**We must also continue to support our very important allied community infrastructure - our health care and educational institutions.**

**And we must continue to be aware and offer a hand up to of those in our community who are most vulnerable.**

**Just shy of a half century ago, our masters, the Province of Ontario, instituted the “Muskoka Act”- establishing the governance structure that continues in effect to this day.**

**One of the primary premises for the creation of the Corporation of the District Municipality of Muskoka was to ensure that our environment was protected.**

**The just concluded election cycle has validated that premise!**

**Our environment continues to be, that which Muskokans value most.**

**Our wetlands, our streams, our rivers and lakes.**

**Our forests, wildlife and magnificent night sky.**

**Our natural assets!**

**Let us not sacrifice that which we all hold so dear.**

**The time is now for a re-energized commitment to protecting our environmental assets.**

**A commitment to appropriately positioned development.**

**Examination of our waste disposal methodologies including recycling, expanded organic composting and waste bin site locations.**

**An examination of road salt methodology and the targeting of the blight of plastics in our society!**

**Continued support for our Watershed Council, Friends of the Muskoka Watershed and our tremendous community-based science of water quality monitoring.**

**So too, let us take a long hard look at our septic system testing and monitoring protocols- I believe we need a comprehensive Muskoka-wide approach to this issue.**

**In addition, despite the overall good health of our Muskoka lakes and rivers, there exist several outliers to this reality. Let us work with the associations of the neighborhoods experiencing water quality anomalies and apply the appropriate resources and science to address the issues.**

**Environment first- our most daunting and yet appropriate challenge.**

**Council, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your indulgence this evening. Over the last eight years, I have often suggested that I felt I had one of the best jobs in Muskoka. Tonight, I continue to feel that way and look forward to working with you and Council!**

**To conclude, may I simply ask that Barbara Ann, my wife, and two sons- Steven and Sean, together with all of Districts Council's, wives, husbands, life partners, and family stand and be acknowledged for allowing and supporting us in our public service. We could not do it without you.**

**Thank you all!**