

Bill Fisch – York Region Chairman and CEO

Notes for Remarks

York Regional Council Inaugural Address

Thursday, December 9, 2010

Regional Council Chambers

7 p.m.

Introduction

Good evening Honourable Regional Senior Justice Michael Brown ... Reverend Vicki Cousins ... members of Council ... honoured guests ... ladies and gentlemen.

I am sincerely humbled, yet incredibly honoured by the trust and confidence members of Regional Council have demonstrated in my ability to serve as your Chairman.

Justice Brown ... thank you for the important role you have played this evening in Council Chambers by swearing in members of Regional Council ... and myself.

Thank you, Reverend Vicki Cousins for the Prayer of Invocation.

Thank you, Constable Danielle Morrison for your beautiful rendition of our National Anthem.

And thank you, Sergeant Peter Fleming, our York Regional Police Piper, for leading the procession into Regional Chambers.

There are several other people here tonight that I would also like to recognize:

- RALPH ASELIN – (MARKHAM)
- CAROLE BELL – (MARKHAM)
- MARGARET BRITNELL – (KING)
- EVELYN BUCK – (AURORA)
- DON COUSENS – (MARKHAM)
- STAN DAURIO – (MARKHAM)
- AL DUFFY – (RICHMOND HILL)
- KEN DUNPHY – (MARKHAM)
- MARIO FERRI – (VAUGHAN)
- JOYCE FRUSTAGLIO – (VAUGHAN)
- LINDA JACKSON – (VAUGHAN)
- TIM JONES – (AURORA)
- RON MORAN – (MARKHAM)
- JIM MORTSON – (EAST GWILLIMBURY)
- BILL O'DONNELL – (MARKHAM)
- JOHN ROGERS – (GEORGINA)
- FRAN SAINSBURY – (STOUFFVILLE)
- JOE VIRGILIO – (MARKHAM)
- TOM TAYLOR – (NEWMARKET)
- JAMIE YOUNG – (EAST GWILLIMBURY)
- HELENA JACZEK, M.P.P.
- FRANK KLEES, M.P.P.
- PETER SHURMAN, M.P.P.
- CHAIRMAN ROGER ANDERSON (DURHAM)
- CHIEF ARMAND LA BARGE

- CHIEF DESIGNATE ERIC JOLLIFFE
- DEPUTY CHIEF BRUCE HERRIDGE
- REGIONAL FIRE COORDINATOR, CHIEF BRYAN BURBIDGE, TOWNSHIP OF KING

To Whitchurch-Stouffville Mayor Wayne Emmerson ... and Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti, my sincere thanks for your kind words, conviction and support. I am proud to have you nominate and second me as your Regional Chairman.

To Mayor Dave Barrow... and Regional Councillor Danny Wheeler, my thanks to each of you for moving and seconding the motion to close nominations tonight.

Thank you to all members of Regional Council for your support.

Acceptance of Duties

As I sit before you today, I pledge that my commitment and dedication to this position will not waiver over the next four years.

Tonight marks the beginning of my fifth term as your Regional Chair – an honour for which my appreciation cannot be overstated.

In fact, as a member of Regional Council since 1994, I have worked directly with 45 of the 102 members who have sat on this Council since the Region was formed in 1970.

Within the confines of this Council Chamber, a great deal has been discussed, debated and accomplished. I count myself blessed to have a job where I work day-in and day-out with people who are committed to serving our community with passion and integrity.

Rudy Giuliani once said: *“There are many qualities that make a great leader. But having strong beliefs, being able to stick with them through popular and unpopular times, is the most important characteristic of a great leader.”*

Over the next four years, I pledge to demonstrate the courage and conviction required to effectively serve as your Chairman ... honouring what we believe is in the best interest of the residents we serve.

Tonight, we celebrate with 13 returning members of Regional Council. We also welcome seven new Council members:

- Mayor Maurizio Bevilacqua
- Aurora Mayor Geoffrey Dawe
- East Gwillimbury Mayor Virginia Hackson
- King Township Mayor Steve Pellegrini
- Markham Regional Councillor Joe Li

- Vaughan Regional Councillor Michael Di Biase
- And Vaughan Regional Councillor Deb Schulte

Congratulations to you all and welcome.

Together, this council brings experience, expertise, passion and leadership to York Region. Collectively, we represent nine area municipalities and more than one million residents of York Region.

We have a very exciting four years ahead of us.

Past Success

York Region is a confederation of nine vibrant communities, each possessing a series of unique attributes. Together, they form a strong, safe and healthy community that we can all be proud of.

Four years ago, I spoke in these Council Chambers to a number of priorities the Region was committed to pursuing. We have made much progress and I would like to take this opportunity to highlight some examples of our mutual success:

Quality of Life:

- York Region showed strong population growth, attracting approximately 27,000 new residents annually ... and witnessed the creation of 35,000 jobs within our communities.
- Resolved concerns about the Ontario Government's *Places to Grow* legislation through the adoption of the updated Regional Official Plan ... a plan that will guide our economic, environmental and community building decisions to manage growth ... and help shape future programs and initiatives.
- Established the Human Services Planning Board to enhance the efficiency of human services within York Region and ensure that our services are available for new and existing residents.

Transportation and Congestion:

- I said it four years ago, and I will say it again ... there is no one solution for transportation and congestion issues in York Region.
- Throughout the last term of Council, the Region executed a series of initiatives to improve transportation service and maintenance delivery, including:

- o The resurfacing and rehabilitation of more than 500 lane-kilometres of regional Roads
- o The purchase of over 200 new York Region Transit vehicles
- o The beginning of construction on the first Viva rapidway in York Region and the commencement of construction on the Spadina Subway extension

Solid Waste:

- We have made significant progress in diversifying our waste management options to strengthen our long-term waste management strategy, including:
 - o The successful Region-wide rollout of the Green Bin program
 - o Leveraging emerging thermal technology to manage the treatment of our waste
 - o Approval from the Ministry of the Environment for the Durham-York Energy-from-Waste facility ... and a signed contract with our operator
 - o And the successful launch of the Region's first Community Environmental Centre in the City of Vaughan

Environment:

- We added necessary capacity to our water supply through York Region capital water projects. As a result of these projects and other improvements to water delivery service, York Region's drinking water supply ranks among the highest in the province.
- We approved the York Region Water Efficiency Master Plan and the implementation of a number of water conservation initiatives, including *Water for Tomorrow*. These innovative and results-oriented initiatives continue to position York Region as a Canadian leader in water conservation.
- We also secured 21 conservation properties through the implementation of newly signed three-year agreements with the Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust, as part of York Region's goal to increase our Regional forest coverage.

Public Safety and Health Protection:

- We effectively managed the pandemic H1N1 influenza activity in York Region through the initiation of priority Public Health response measures.
- We increased paramedic staff with the addition of 44 new members ... added three ambulances ... and opened two paramedic response stations to better meet increasing demand.

Financial Constraints:

- And in a matter that I hold very near to my heart, York Region successfully addressed the fiscal imbalance between the province and municipalities ... a result of GTA pooling ... and will see the program completely phased out in 2013.

As you can see, we have much to be proud of.

Future Opportunities

Today, York Region stands at the threshold of significant evolution and change. Our population is growing ... and *our* role is to ensure the growth is appropriate ... well-timed ... and our services can meet increased demand.

Change is inevitable ... but it is the extent to which we are prepared to effectively manage change that will determine our success as a Region.

A great deal of groundwork has been undertaken to bring us to where we stand today. I have no doubt the critical initiatives that we will collaborate on over the next four years will reinforce York Region's reputation as a great place to live ... work ... and visit.

Will we face challenges? Absolutely. But with the collective experience, expertise and leadership of our Regional Council, we will turn those challenges into opportunities to create a better York Region for us all.

As we move into the next term of Council, there are a number of strategic policies the Region will continue to pursue. Let me take a moment to touch on a few:

Fiscally Responsible Governance:

As members of Regional Council, it is our responsibility to provide fiscally responsible governance that will ensure the continued prosperity of our communities.

Our work, of course, is subject to budgetary constraints. Together, we will work to keep taxes as low as possible, while delivering the range and quality of services our residents deserve.

Managing our budget effectively now will help us create exceptional and distinctive communities that maintain an “above average” niche in the Greater Toronto Area. Not only must we consider the immediate financial needs of the Region, we must commit to sound fiscal practices that will benefit taxpayers over the long-term.

- In the short-term, York Region has the welcome opportunity to determine how savings from GTA pooling between now and 2013 can be applied to our annual budget.
- In the long-term, careful investment management, guided by a comprehensive investment policy, will ensure that York Region is better positioned to meet our long-term operating and capital requirements in a cost effective manner. To-date, York’s Region’s investment income has consistently outperformed despite the global economic recession.

For the ninth consecutive year, York Region has maintained its AAA credit rating. Together, we must work to ensure our credit rating can continue to benefit from favourable borrowing rates for financing our major capital projects and servicing our debt.

Fiscally responsible governance also extends to strategic infrastructure development ... such as the proposed Central Service Centre planned for the corner of Yonge Street and Eagle Street in the Town of Newmarket.

- The proposed 340,000 square foot LEED certified structure will house a new 10-court room facility replacing the one at the Tannery Mall.
- Currently, Community and Health Service programs are scattered in locations across Newmarket. The development of a Central Service Centre will provide better customer service for our taxpayers and will be a more efficient way to deliver Regional services.
- Financially, it makes more sense to invest in our own state-of-the-art infrastructure that will deliver a long-term return on investment ... than continue to pay for expensive leased space we currently occupy.
- The new York Regional Police Central Services Building in Aurora is a testament to this kind of financially responsible investment.

Sustainable Infrastructure Development:

Investing in infrastructure is directly linked to York Region's ability to successfully manage growth.

Our vision for Viva Rapid Transit, the first rapid transit service of its kind in Canada, is coming to fruition.

Billions of dollars in infrastructure have been invested to provide rapid transit in York Region's urban centres and corridors. At long last, the Spadina Subway extension has commenced ... and this Council should see the completion of the project in 2014. Over the next four years, pre-construction efforts will continue to ensure that we are on track to commence construction work in 2015 on rapidway segments in the City of Vaughan and Town of Richmond Hill.

We will continue to work collaboratively with Metrolinx to complete all the funded rapidway projects in York Region by 2020 ... and will participate on ongoing discussions with senior levels of government to secure funding for the remaining projects within the vivaNext plan.

While current provincial growth projections for York Region and Simcoe County have reinforced the need for the Bradford Bypass, the Provincial Growth Plan has excluded the bypass from consideration ... without providing an alternate solution. It will be the responsibility of Regional Committee and Council to continue to advocate for the advancement of this key piece of infrastructure.

Health Protection and Public Safety:

York Region's current population now exceeds one million people and is expected to grow to 1.5 million people by 2031. Combined with an aging demographic, York Region's hospitals cannot meet the rate of population growth without expanding.

To ensure that residents receive the level of care they have come to expect, the Region has entered into a multi-year commitment for hospital capital financing of \$12 million dollars per year through to 2031.

This Regional funding commitment will help offset funding shortfalls in hospital capital expansion projects for Markham-Stouffville Hospital in the Town of Markham ... Southlake Regional Health Centre Hospital in the Town of Newmarket ... York Central

Hospital in the Town of Richmond Hill ... and the new Vaughan Campus of Care Hospital in the City of Vaughan.

While York Region is committed to supporting health care and service delivery, we continue to advocate that the funding of hospital capital projects should be the sole responsibility of the Province of Ontario.

I look to each and every one of you to work with myself, our CAO and staff to continue to push for the reinstatement of Development Charge (DC) funding for a portion of hospital expansion costs so York Region can phase out our funding role in the long-term.

York Regional Police officers play a vital role in fostering a safe community. Under the direction of new Chief of Police, Eric Jolliffe, York Region will reinforce its commitment to community-based policing through enhanced ties with community groups. This commitment is crucial in maintaining York Region's status as one of the safest communities in Canada ... with the lowest crime rate in Ontario.

Preserving our Quality of Life:

As many residents would attest, we already enjoy a quality of life that is enviable to many. But, we will not rest on our laurels ... as our job is to ensure this quality of life continues ... and where possible... improves.

York Region has made significant headway with respect to affordable housing in York Region. In fact, we have commenced construction of over 250 additional affordable housing units in the City of Vaughan ... Township of King ... and Town of Richmond Hill ... which are expected to be completed in 2011.

This is great progress ... but it is not enough. This Council must do more to meet the needs of the more than 6,500 applicants on the waiting list for affordable housing in the Region. This Council must ensure that we continue dialogue with key stakeholders to develop a Regional strategy for affordable housing.

Our quality of life in York Region is also directly linked to our unwavering commitment to environmental protection. Every day, York Region delivers safe and clean drinking water and safely treats wastewater. Over the next four years, this Council will be involved in a series of key projects and priorities related to increasing critical wastewater capacity ... and securing and protecting drinking water for York Region residents.

Sustainability:

Sustainability is increasingly at the core of everything we do.

From Community Environmental Centres to Electronic Equipment drop-off events, sustainability is one of the guiding principles of our long-term waste management strategy.

Have we faced challenges when it comes to diverting waste? Yes. Sometimes that comes with being a leader.

But in the face of these challenges, York Region is proud to be considered a leader in waste diversion and continues its commitment to the diversification of long-term waste management solutions.

This includes the recent approval of the Durham-York Energy From Waste Facility for which construction is scheduled to commence in 2011 ... and the facility is expected to be operational in 2014.

This facility provides York Region with a sustainable, made-in-Ontario, long-term waste management solution ... and supports York Region's commitment to support the fourth "R" ... energy recovery.

York Region's commitment to sustainability also extends to the Sustainable Development Through LEED program ... the first of its kind in Ontario – that has raised the standard for sustainable building and environmental protection that is being embraced across our Region.

Developing Effective Long-term Strategic Plans:

In 2002, York Region released its vision statement, currently known as Vision 2026. Since then, both the Province and York Region have developed key initiatives that influence the way we do business in York Region.

In 2011, we commemorate the past 40 years since 1971, when the Region was incorporated. Not only will we look back over the last 40 years, we will look ahead to the next 40 years. Regional Council endorsed a 40-year timeframe for the next update to our Vision statement – Vision 2051.

Each and every one of you in this room will play an important role in shaping what the next 40 years look like for York Region. We will work together to ensure our vision statement reflects and builds on recent success, including innovative and progressive concepts in sustainability that are already incorporated, or will be, over the coming years.

The new vision will build on key policies, including the Sustainability Strategy, the Regional Official Plan, the Climate Change Discussion Paper and Best Practices for New Communities Discussion Paper.

We need to make decisions in the short-term that support the Region's long-term objectives.

Regional Staff

Over the next four years we will peruse a number of issues and initiatives.

Residents of York Region have chosen you to take them into the future ... to create a better community for them ... their children ... and their children's children. It's a hefty responsibility ... but it is also an incredible honour and privilege.

We will be challenged with difficult issues ... and we will not always agree ...but we will always act in the best interest of our residents knowing that the information on which our decisions are based undergo the highest level of scrutiny imaginable through studies, research and debate.

We are fortunate to have Bruce Macgregor as our Chief Administrative Officer to help guide us through the next term of Council. Assisting our CAO is an experienced Senior Management Team and all of our Regional employees.

I cannot begin to express how fortunate York Region is to benefit from the collective passion and expertise of York Region's employees. I thank all of our staff. With employees like you, it is little wonder that York Region was recently awarded one of the Top 100 Employers in the GTA for 2011.

I would like to express special thanks to our Emergency Medical Services personnel ... public health officials ... and water and wastewater experts ... who are on the front line every day, ensuring the protection and well-being of our residents.

Closing Remarks

Ladies and gentlemen, before you are your representatives for York Regional Council for this term of office. We work for the residents and businesses of York Region, with a common goal to improve on the high quality of life we already enjoy.

Our job is often not an easy one. We are tasked with balancing the priorities of our municipalities against what is best suited for all our taxpayers. Our strength lies in our partnerships ... in collaboration ... and our collective wisdom.

As a lifelong baseball fan, let me draw on a baseball analogy: *"We continue to go to bat for our residents, and York Region has a pretty good batting average."*

To members of Regional Council, thank you for the trust and faith you continue to place in me. Over the next four years, we have many challenges to face, and we relish the opportunities those challenges bring.

Thank you.