



Inaugural Address by Mayor Linda Buchanan
Delivered in City Chambers
November 7, 2022

Tackling the Challenges of Today for a Better Tomorrow: Much Accomplished, More to Do

Honoured guests, members of Council, ladies and gentlemen, good evening.

It is a pleasure to be here with you tonight and deliver this inaugural address. I am honoured and deeply humbled to return as your Mayor for a second term. Like you, I love this City, and serving it as your Mayor is truly an incredible honour.

Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge that we are gathered on the traditional lands of the Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations. These Nations remain deeply connected to their lands and waters and as we build community here, it is critical we acknowledge this has been the home of the Coast Salish People since time immemorial.

Our communities are bound by a shared history and by a new spirit of collaboration and reconciliation. We are partners as well as neighbours. Together we are building stronger relationships and taking action on our shared priorities. I thank them for sharing this land with us and for their ongoing partnerships.

On behalf of Council, there are a number of people I would like to thank. Firstly, I want to thank all of you for attending this important occasion.

I would also like to thank everyone who put their name forward in this election as well as all the families, friends, and volunteers who supported all candidates in their campaigns. No campaign is easy, and every campaign is a team effort. For me personally, I want to thank my family for all your support and love not only throughout this campaign, but also throughout each and everyday.

I would also like to thank people across the City for engaging in this election and getting out to vote. It is my hope that in the years to come we will see more residents exercise this right and make their voices heard.

I would like to offer a word of thanks to our City staff led by our Chief Administrative Officer, Dr. Leanne McCarthy. While we were all out there shaking hands and talking about the issues, you were hard at work, making sure that the City was operating efficiently. Our success as a Council is not possible without the tremendous support we receive from all municipal employees. A special thank you to the staff who, once again, ensured that our election was run to the highest standards of transparency, integrity, and professionalism.

To Ms. Karla Graham, our Corporate Officer, the Clerks Office and Mrs. Kendra McEachern and Ms. Tamara Connor from the Mayor's Office who are responsible for organizing tonight's proceedings, thank you.

For this evening's inauguration, I would like to recognize and thank the following people for their participation:

- The Honourable Chief Justice Michael Thomas for performing the Oath of Office Ceremony;
- Chief Janice George of the Squamish Nation for her welcome;
- The RCMP Colour Party Sgt. Peri Mainwaring and Cpl. Paulo Arreaga;
- The North Vancouver City Fire Department Honour Guard Firefighter Mitch MacKay and Firefighter Sam Sedun;
- Terry Shaw, Piper, JP Fell Piper Band; and
- Vocalist Thomas Dubouchet from Sutherland Secondary School Choir for singing "O Canada."

Last but certainly not least, I want to thank and recognize outgoing Councillor Tina Hu who made the decision not to run again. Cllr. Hu, it has been an honour and pleasure to work with you over these past 4 years. In your quiet way, but with strength, you have been an incredible advocate for increased childcare spaces, equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism. Thank you for your leadership. I am so proud to call you a colleague and a friend.

I want to offer my congratulations to Councillors Back, Bell, Girard, McIlroy, and Valente on your re-election to Council. Welcome back. In addition, I want to extend a warm welcome to Cllr. Shahriari on his election — the first Iranian-born Canadian to be elected to public office in B.C. We are so proud to have you join us. I am eager to work with all of you in the term ahead in a collaborative and constructive way.

In my Inaugural address 4 years ago, I spoke of how our health is very much influenced by the very things we do here at City Hall, starting with the decisions we make at this table. Together with citizens and community partners, we can create a 'Healthy City for All.' This vision became the basis for the first-ever Council Strategic Plan in 2019.

Never did we imagine, that not long after its adoption, we would find ourselves in the midst of a global pandemic, multiple climate disasters, inflation unlike anything we have seen in decades, and war in Ukraine, just to name a few challenges of the past few years.

All of which came on the heels of a housing crisis, a childcare shortage, and mounting public health challenges. Council's Strategic Plan guided and focused our work over these past 4 years and it will continue to do so throughout this term. Now more than ever, people are aware of the role cities play in supporting people's health and we cannot slow the work we have started. As leaders, this is our moment — our window of opportunity — to push for bold and innovative solutions to the systemic problems before us.

We cannot settle for partial fixes or return to the old ways of doing things. We cannot go backwards and put at risk the progress we have made together. While much has been accomplished, there is more work to do.

We all know that secure and attainable housing is the essential building block of healthy communities. Over the last four years Council has worked together to deliver new policies and programs so that more housing is within reach for people across the City.

We did this with an innovative program for home ownership, delivering mid-market units within purpose rental, new protections for renters, and approving the single largest investment in deeply affordable housing in the City's history as part of the new rebuild of North Shore Neighbourhood House.

However, more needs to be done to ensure everyone has a safe and suitable home to return to at the end of the day.

Premier-designate David Eby has laid out ambitious goals to increase housing supply across the province. This plan will challenge local leaders. However, we can meet this challenge and, in working with the province, remain a leader in housing innovation.

Over this next term, we will focus on further advancing rent-to-own home financing for first time buyers, advancing rental homes, supportive housing and family-oriented homes, advocating for pet friendly homes, and ensuring that seniors have options so they can stay in the community as they age.

We must continue to streamline the approvals process for building permits that was started over this past term — especially for those projects that will deliver affordable and rental housing that we so desperately need.

We must seize every opportunity to deliver attainable housing in partnerships with others.

Sustainable and efficient transportation choices is another critical building block, alongside our land use, in creating healthier communities, and one that will continue to require our attention in the term to come.

Rising fuel prices has emerged as a major drain on household budgets, and a threat to our supply chains. That is why over the last four years this Council has redoubled our efforts and built upon the work of our predecessors to make our City a more compact, walkable community for people of all ages and all abilities decreasing our dependency on this finite resource.

It is why we have worked hard to deliver kilometers of new mobility lanes, and why we introduced the first-ever electric bike share program in British Columbia. It is why I fought hard at the TransLink Mayors' Council table to ensure that new rapid transit infrastructure for the North Shore was included in the new 10-year investment plan.

However, we are far from done. Across the North Shore, we need to keep the pressure on to ensure that senior levels of government live up to their commitments to fund this rapid transit. We need to keep the pressure on to ensure we get our fair share of transit dollars for our bus network — the backbone of our public transit system.

We must continue to advance initiatives that connect our community, such as the Casano-Loutet overpass and extending our greenway network into City neighbourhoods on the North side of the City, which has effectively been divided from the rest of the City by Highway-1.

These initiatives support the health of people, the environment and the economy. Initiatives such as these are being implemented in cities throughout the world as more and more people move to urban settings.

Healthy communities are safe communities. Public safety was an important issue in many communities' this past election and, although we are a safe City, we can never take this for granted. We must continue to build our social resilience so that all people can live and thrive here.

I am proud that in our last term of Council we finally moved forward on the long overdue rebuilding of the Harry Jerome Community Recreation Centre and Silver Harbour Seniors Centre. Once complete, these buildings will be modern, sustainable, and flexible meeting places for our community to gather and connect, for decades to come.

I am also proud that we made a commitment to build a new North Shore Neighbourhood House — an institution founded in the dark days of the great depression that has been a lifeline through its many programs for individuals, families and seniors for nearly a century. Once complete, this new facility will be the cornerstone of a community hub in Lower Lonsdale for what I hope will be another century of community programming.

However, buildings such as the Harry Jerome Recreation Centre and the Neighbourhood House do not form the connections that are so essential to a healthy community. They come from the countless hours put in by volunteers and staff from many organizations in our community.

They come from our commitment to expand childcare spaces, and support programs for youth, seniors, and respite care. They come from a commitment to build a vibrant city that has dynamic public, people-oriented spaces and provides opportunities for all people to connect and engage with community.

This is how we deepen our social resilience and help lift others up.

Together we have worked hard to build a caring, inclusive and connected community and never have I been prouder, when throughout this pandemic, I saw our community go above and beyond to support others. This is who we are as a community.

Our Open Streets program has allowed for an enhanced pedestrian experience and supported our business community throughout the pandemic.

Our parklets have created much needed outdoor seating. Our Pride Parklet and crosswalk, the first across the North Shore, demonstrate that this is a community where we love and care for everyone.

By allowing for the safe consumption of alcohol in parks, the first City in Canada outside of Quebec, we have seen our green spaces busier than ever before, acting as venues for birthdays, barbeques, and more.

The creation of the Shipyards Brewery District is proof enough that vibrant cities are social cities, prosperous cities, fun cities, and diverse cities. Forward thinking ambition has delivered for this City since its inception. We must continue to lean in, leverage our successes and expand upon them.

As we look to the future with optimism and ambition, we know that we will have to reckon with a tough, new climate and economic reality. Climate change is here and will be with us for decades to come. We have seen its effects across B.C. with catastrophic floods and heat events resulting in hundreds of deaths making the effects of climate change very real to people.

The City has long been a leader in innovative and progressive climate policies.

Our new draft Environment Strategy calls for the City to address the causes of climate change by becoming a net-zero carbon community by 2050. Today and through this term, we need to act with determination to reinforce our climate resilience and apply a climate lens to all work we do as a council. That means cutting carbon pollution from major sources, buildings and transportation, and expanding our urban agriculture and food recovery.

That means continuing to expand and protect our urban tree canopy and ensure that we meet our goal of having a park within a 5-minute walk of every residence in the City. While trees and parks improve our quality of life, we know they also offer cooling during extreme heat and mitigate the impact of extreme rain events.

These initiatives are crucial in confronting environmental challenges.

The interconnectedness of the environment, individual wellbeing, and the economy is why Council put health at the centre of our agenda in 2019. As we look to move forward from the pandemic, we need to consider how we can maintain the same momentum because it has served people well.

I believe medium sized cities, like ours, will be the engines that drive our economy forward across the nation. I want us to continue to work with the business community to shape the City's economic future strategically and with intentionality.

Our goal is to support existing businesses while attracting new talent, investment and enterprises to the City.

As we move into 2023, I will be focused on creating an Economic Health Cluster. We will look to attract a collection of health and technology businesses and services around the Lions Gate Hospital Campus, helping to transform the Central Lonsdale area.

By responding to the anticipated growth in healthcare, life sciences and technology, we can play a critical role in both the delivery of improved care as well as the delivery of a new economic driver for the region as a whole. We are positioning ourselves to work at the intersection of health and the economy.

As we saw in the last four years, we should expect the unexpected.

Events we cannot anticipate may very well come to dominate our lives in the way that COVID-19 has over the last four years. Being at the helm requires us to embrace a sense of agility and nimbleness — and will absolutely require us to make some difficult decisions.

There is so much more to do to build a more equitable and healthy community.

I stand before you tonight to say that despite the challenges before us, if we get the fundamentals right — affordable housing, transportation options, creating a safe and inclusive community, and building climate and economic resiliency — we will have a bright future.

These are my priorities as your Mayor. Having listened to my Council colleagues through the election and in the weeks that followed, I know that these are their priorities too.

Our success cannot be left to chance. It requires putting in the work each and every day to build a community we can be proud to leave for future generations. I am confident that if we all work together, we will achieve great things for this City.

I truly believe we can make our City *the* place to live, work, and play.

Our potential is endless. When we focus on *what is possible*, instead of what is not, when we ask *what we need* as a community, instead of what we do not want, we build better cities for people.

Together, we will build a great City.

So, let's get to work!

Thank you.