



Inaugural State of the City Address

November 5, 2019

12 p.m.

The Wallace at the Shipyards

I want to begin today by welcoming all of you to the inaugural State of the City luncheon.

I can't think of a more perfect place to kick off this event than in our new and beautiful Shipyard Commons.

This event is something that is new for the city and for the Mayor's Office.

It's something I hope will become a regular event where we collectively renew our connections, assess our progress, celebrate some of our accomplishments and begin, together, to look to the future of where we can and should go as a community.

I also want to recognize that today's event is taking place on the unceded and traditional territory of the Squamish, Tsleil-waututh, and Musqueam peoples.

The Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Councils are key government partners for us and I look forward to collaborating more and more with them over the coming years.

I also want to thank the Port of Vancouver for sponsoring today's event.

I really appreciate your support and I value the longstanding partnership that the City has had with you.

There are so many things going on in North Vancouver that people often forget the fact that we are, have been, and always will be a port City.

So this address is occurring on a pretty special day: it was one year ago today that our City's new Council was sworn in.

While the swearing in of a new Council is not something too remarkable, we shouldn't forget just what a big change the swearing in of **this** Council represented for our community.

I was coming in to the Mayor's chair that my predecessor and good friend Darrell Mussatto had occupied for 13 years.

So I really felt like a new face in this role – even though I had served 7 years on Council prior to my election as Mayor.

We saw 4 first time candidates elected as Councillors – Councillors Girard, Hu, McIlroy, and Valente.

One has to go back to the 1970s to see this degree of change and renewal on Council.

By any measure, this was a big change.

This Council is also very young.

Most Councillors are in their 40s or younger – and were it not for myself, Cllrs Holly Back and Don Bell, who were unable to be here today, dragging it up we would have an average age of council somewhere under 45!

More importantly, in a region where only 3 of Metro's 21 Mayors are women, 5 out of 7 members of this Council are women – one of the highest proportion of any Council in the lower mainland and an example of things to come for elected assemblies across the country.

Finally, this new Council was sworn in just a couple of months after the City appointed its first new CAO in 20 years, and our first female CAO, Leanne McCarthy.

Needless to say, this is a lot of change.

It has certainly meant that there has been significant on-the-job learning for all of us on Council – more of a learning 90-degree-angle than a learning curve!

Despite the challenges of getting used to the new roles, I think one of the things that has guided this new Council is a clear collective vision of the kind of community we have been elected to help build; a vision that has been put down on paper for the first time in the City's history in a strategic plan.

This plan is helping guide and focus Council's work, as a reminder of the job we have been elected to do, and as a reminder to staff of the important role they play in supporting this work.

The vision outlined in our strategic plan of being the healthiest small City, builds on our long term aspirations within our official community plan and shows where council wants to ***bend the curve*** over this term.

The relationship between cities and health is an important one.

As leaders we are aware that the City we want to shape and build – the policies we pursue and the choices we make - matter for health.

Globally, as more people continue to move to cities, we are seeing bold leadership being exercised at the local level to address many of the complex emerging environmental, economic and social issues.

Our council's priorities reflect our commitment to building on our past successes and advancing as a forward thinking, ambitious, competitive city.

The City of North Vancouver has long been a leader in the area of environmental sustainability.

Our compact, walkable, transit-oriented community is an example for other communities.

In an era where the global climate crisis is, indeed, a crisis, we cannot afford to lose momentum as we move forward.

Just in this past year, we committed to change the City's GHG reduction targets to achieve net zero by 2050.

And we are in the process of developing a new Climate and Environment Strategy and committee to support our pathway to this ambitious goal.

This past April we

- adopted our Electric Vehicle Strategy,
- implemented our 2nd direct current fast charging station
- and adopted Walk CNV,

Making it easier for our residents to choose sustainable and active transportation.

Our commitment to enhancing and protecting the health of our environment is also supported by our partners.

With the generous donation by CN Rail and Tree Canada, 100 trees will be planted in Moodyville Park later this month, helping us to expand our urban forest and tree canopy.

And later this year Adera will be opening Crest - one of the first developments in BC to use mass timber technology with the City being 1 of only 13 municipalities to be an early adopter of this new, sustainable building practice.

I see representatives from both CN Rail and Adera here today, so thank you to Joslyn and Rocky and your teams.

A City's health can also be defined in economic terms.

Over the past year we've continued to work to ensure that businesses can thrive and prosper here by establishing a competitive local tax rate and the kind of population growth that supports commercial and retail vibrancy.

With the increased commercial property assessment values, along with the port property tax review by the province, I know there is anxiety about the impact these could have on business operations.

And I understand those anxieties and what it could mean to our community.

I have supported the work of our ports and industries there, like Seaspan, by constant advocacy, as well as working, on behalf of council, for our small business community to request a provincial review of '**highest and best use**' valuation.

And this past year council shifted 2% of tax from Class 6 Business to Class 1 Residential.

We need to make sure we have a tax system that is supportive to all and does not unfairly burden others.

Despite some of the challenges, the City continues to have a robust small business community that is growing.

A number of those small businesses are here in Lower Lonsdale and the Lower Lonsdale Business Improvement Association has done a tremendous job in enhancing a sense of place and community connection that make this area thrive.

Greg thank you, and your board for all you do.

Council earlier this year approved an industrial commercial zoning amendment making way for the region's newest brewery cluster.

It's amazing how making that small change, adding beer and calling it a 'Brewery District' garnered so much community feedback.

A resident named Paige wrote me to say:

'as a renter under 30, now more than ever I feel there is a bright future for young people in the CNV... the new brewery district is a small example of how our neighbourhood is becoming a place to share, play and collaborate'

I know Darren and his wife from House of Funk Brewing Company are here this afternoon as well, so thank you and your business colleagues for adding to our business community and neighbourhood vibrancy.

This past summer, I made it a point to personally visit with local business owners in their shops and offices in the Central Lonsdale area.

It was important to me to introduce myself and hear firsthand their experiences and how together we could work to make Lonsdale a 'great high street'.

I had some wonderful and unexpected experiences during this tour – like meeting

Bahman Sahmei who runs a small bookshop at 16th called Hamsaz Cultural Center.

The store, which has been there for 20 years, is a little hidden trove of wonders, and Bahman was so gracious and welcoming.

He sent me back to my office with a beautiful leather bound book of Persian poetry.

And I met Francisco who runs the new Tequila Cocina on 19th.

Such a great ambiance and friendly staff – although kindly offered, I declined the afternoon tequila but I did return on another evening with my husband and enjoyed a fun night.

These are just a couple of examples of the amazing people and businesses along the Central Lonsdale corridor who are working hard to make ends meet and contribute to the community.

In these conversations, I was struck by how many people share the same concerns, and had similar suggestions on how to improve business.

Later this month I, along with City staff, will be continuing these conversations at an event at City Hall.

Our City's position of having the campus of LGH and the surrounding assets in health care are a real strategic advantage in developing a health care cluster in Central Lonsdale to provide an incentive for business investment, attract talent, and create jobs and better health outcomes for our citizens.

I am happy to announce that last night, Council approved moving forward with the next steps in making that happen.

And in early 2020, staff will be updating our economic development strategy.

As a Public Health nurse and a people person, it was the human, social aspect of sustainability that motivated me when I came to office.

As a Councillor and as candidate for Mayor I campaigned for children and families to figure as prominently in the strategic planning of municipalities as density and traffic and infrastructure.

It isn't simply because I have children that I am passionate about putting people at the forefront of our agenda.

It's because I have seen how hard it is becoming for people to stay and prosper in our community.

I saw that, without a clear focus on ensuring that we remain an economically, culturally, and demographically diverse community, we would be hollowed out of children, of families, of businesses as has happened in other communities.

Everything I saw from the perspective of a parent, of a nurse, of a Councillor in my previous roles – all my concerns about the challenges people face today - have been vividly confirmed and highlighted for me in my new role.

They've been highlighted in the story of a young family who, having outgrown their small basement suite, moved to a rental only to find out it was up for redevelopment and needed to move again.

And in the stories of women I've met who are experiencing homelessness in our City and who have to struggle and fear for their safety each night they're on the street.

And in the restaurant owners who couldn't stay open 7 days a week because of the lack of staff.

And in the many stories of families who are unable to find appropriate childcare or after school care.

I get the reality of these struggles; and I am so thankful to say that our Council gets this too; and I am proud that we have a talented, creative and hardworking staff at the City that works every day to ensure that we can lead effectively on putting people first.

One great example from this year was the unveiling of the North Shore's first rainbow crosswalk on Lonsdale.

A LGBTQ adult, a North Vancouverite since birth, wrote me to say:

‘if I had seen that rainbow crosswalk back when I was young, I would have known that this is a City where I am welcome. That it’s my city too and that I deserve to be here as much as all my neighbours.’

To which I say loudly and proudly...Yes, you do!

If we can have a City where people from all backgrounds, people from all income brackets, and people of all ages can find opportunity, we will all succeed together.

Failing that, the businesses represented in this room will not be able to depend on the fact that their business can succeed for years to come because they won’t have access to the people who are integral to their success.

The social service agencies represented in this room will be overwhelmed and stretched to the breaking point.

And our ability as a City to provide the high level of services and infrastructure that we do will simply disappear.

So, one year in, I have not lost focus on the fact that it is **people** that make the difference in a community.

As much as I want to highlight **people** I also want to highlight **partnership**.

When you get a new Mayor for the first time in 13 years, 4 new Councillors and a new CAO, those old connections and relationships might be challenged simply by unfamiliarity.

It's why I've had a very open door policy in my office and why I want to ensure that we stay in touch through regular events such as this annual State of the City lunch.

All partnerships begin with good relationships and it is a priority for me that – whether or not we agree on everything – we have the opportunity to keep lines of communication open.

But the point of partnerships is not merely to have good relationships: it is to get things done for the people in our community.

As a City we cannot begin to address all of the challenges we face alone: we need all of you as partners.

I want to give a call out again, to our hosts for today, the Port of Vancouver.

The City has a great partnership with them based on our joint recognition of the economic importance of the port in our local economy.

I know that the port and its major players – Richardson’s, Western Stevedoring, CN, Washington and Seaspan, and G3– hire thousands of workers to good-paying family supporting jobs that sustain our community in innumerable ways.

They are also major contributors to the City’s bottom line.

I want to assure all of you that I recognize your contributions and that you will always find in me a champion for the port and port industries that do so much for our community.

I was pleased over the past year to raise port issues in direct meetings with Prime Minister Trudeau in Quebec City where I emphasized the importance of continued federal funding for the national ship building program being delivered in part by Seaspan here in North Vancouver.

We also have a robust and growing partnership with Capilano U, who will be opening a new campus in Lower Lonsdale in just a few weeks.

The CityStudio collaboration with Capilano University has students working with our City staff on key projects throughout our community.

This partnership gives students the chance to get work experience and get more involved in the community

while also giving us a great pool of new ideas and talent to draw from – perfect symbiosis!

My thanks to Paul Dangerfield and the team at CapU for being such proactive partners to us.

Non-profits like the North Shore Neighbourhood House, Family Services North Shore, North Shore Multicultural Society, Hollyburn Family Service, or the Canadian Mental Health Association, who are represented here today, are often the first point of contact for those in our community who are struggling.

We need to be there as partners with you to support your work – and I'm proud to say that over the past year we have provided 2.1 million dollars to our non-profit community.

We are working with the NSNH planning for a new home and better facilities including a partnership with Hollyburn FS, BC Housing, Care BC and Catalyst Community Housing Society to deliver housing for vulnerable youth and seniors, as well as respite care for seniors.

We're working with the NSMS to support them in finding a newer facility

These are the things that will sustain these organizations for decades more in our community.

The circle of partnership extends beyond those that link, for instance, the City to social service agencies.

When the NSNH gets a new home it will not be the City that builds it - its new home will be the result of a partnership with a builder/developer – perhaps a company in this room.

Polygon is delivering a new museum to the City, as part of its new project Promenade on Esplanade by Lonsdale Quay, an added cultural amenity to enhance our cultural precinct that includes Cityscape Gallery, the Polygon Gallery, Presentation Theatre to name a few.

In the past year, too, we are moving forward to develop and deliver a new community centre to replace the aging Harry Jerome rec centre.

We have been lucky to benefit from healthy development activity and strong partnerships with industry that have delivered the infrastructure our residents expect and deserve.

I also know that this is a partnership that we need to help deliver on the most pressing challenges facing people in our community – housing in particular.

Over the past year, despite a shifting economy, we've seen some level of development and re-zoning continue, however, the majority of focus has shifted to rental units.

GWL has been approved to deliver a project of family-oriented rental housing at 2nd and St. George's that will deliver 160 units including 16 mid market units.

Starlight on East Keith will deliver 40 units with 4 mid market units for seniors and VRS in partnership with the City will deliver 85 units with 10 non-market units.

So in total, this council has approved 311 Units of rental in perpetuity, 278 market, 23 mid-market and 10 non-market.

We have also approved a number of smaller SF homes with suites or infill, duplexes and 2 coach houses.

In the last five years, we've seen the delivery of close to 1,300 rental/affordable rental/non-market housing units.

I know our collaborative partnership with builders and developers is one that we absolutely will need to sustain if we are to live up to our commitment of putting people first.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the other crucial partnerships that the City has with the Province of BC and the Federal Government.

Having served as Councillor through many years when federal and provincial policy was an impediment rather than an aid in meeting peoples housing needs, when Canada remained the only G-7 nation without a national housing strategy, when the Province could not see much past the downtown east side, I am glad to see that we now have partners at senior levels of government who are serious about addressing our housing challenges.

Over the last four years the federal government has put forward its first major housing investments in almost three decades.

We value these first steps and we urge them to go further.

Within my first few months of being elected Mayor, I had a surprise call from the PM, and while trying hard not to fall off my chair, I did advocate for stronger investment in housing.

I am very pleased that we have a provincial government that is making investments in affordable housing, non-market housing, and affordable home ownership that are historic in scale.

We in the City have been able to take advantage of those investments.

In its first act as a new Council in fall 2018, our neighbours in District of North Vancouver decided to reject an 80 unit supportive housing project.

I was first in line to meet with the Province to ensure that those dollars stayed on the North Shore and will help fund Hollyburn FS and Care BC projects in our community.

Last January, at the Chamber of Commerce's, Conversation with the Mayors I announced my Balanced Housing Solutions Lab and I am pleased to say this lab began in early September.

Working together with partners on the North Shore and UBC, the BHL will collaboratively to develop new solutions to providing new housing options for households with incomes of \$50,000 to \$100,000 per year and will generate new approaches to delivering housing solutions.

This work is critically important to ensure we can deliver the kind of housing that is desperately needed by many of the very people who deliver essential services such as nurses, teachers and first responders, who are represented here today.

I want to recognize Jonathan Wilkinson, our federal MP, and Bowinn Ma, our local MLA.

Their contributions have been vital in helping the City to move forward on important initiatives, including transportation.

Contributions and funding commitments from the Province of BC and the government of Canada are changing the equation on transportation for a dense, urban community like ours.

There is still work to do on the chronic problem of traffic congestion on Highway 1 as it passes through the City – and the City has been a willing partner in the INSTPP initiative, and now NXSTPP, that is trying to undo the traffic congestion that has been created, in part, by decades of ignoring this issue and not planning for transit alternatives.

Giving credit where credit is due, I'd like to acknowledge MLA Jane Thornthwaite for her contributions while in government to advancing the Lower Lynn inter-change work that is currently happening.

This past year has seen important steps forward in making sure that the new funds that the Province and the federal government have put on the table are going to be used right here in the City.

I had the opportunity to travel with some of my colleagues from the Mayor's Council to Ottawa last spring for *Transit on the Hill*, where we met with all major parties in advance of their campaign platforms to advocate for permanent, predictable funding for public transportation,

an ask that was reflected in the platforms of both the federal liberals and the NDP.

I was also thrilled to announce earlier this year that the City of North Vancouver received \$250,000 from Western Economic Diversification Canada through the Federal Government to work on developing an economic case for addressing congestion on the North Shore, funding that will support the ongoing fixed link feasibility study by the province and help us move forward with long term transportation solutions for our region.

I would like to thank Patrick Stafford-Smith from the Chamber of Commerce, along with their board, for being steadfast advocates over the past several years for transportation investment to the North Shore.

I was happy to lead a Council and a community that stood solidly behind the historic extension of B-Line transit service across the north shore and through the City, that will be opening in April.

This is a great partnership with Translink and as many of you will know there are communities that are simply turning their backs on these opportunities.

Which brings me to my final message – which is really about **how** we do our business as a City.

The local elections of last October brought significant change to Council here and in Council Chambers across the region.

In some places, newly elected Councils have viewed those changes as the opportunity to change everything, to throw out the **progress** that had been made by previous Councils in partnership with industry and the social service sector, and they simply dig their heels in to give an angry “no” to whatever had gone before.

Sitting at the Metro Vancouver Board as Vice Chair and at the Translink Mayor’s Council tables,

I’ve seen how disruptive this kind of attitude has been to the well-laid and well-thought-out plans we’ve made for the region.

Ultimately, it did make for tougher conversations and commitments to actually work more collaboratively together and think, more than ever, as a region.

This response was absolutely critical as we plan for Metro and Transportation 2050.

I cannot speak for nor answer for what is going on in other communities.

But I will make you this commitment: in the City of North Vancouver we are aware that the work we are doing today is built on the efforts of Mayors and Councils that have come before us.

I will lead us forward to build on that work and to continue to move the ball forward ensuring we are a City that has all the pieces in place for generations to come.

I know that if we are to deliver on the real and pressing issues that **people** throughout our community face, we can only do that in **partnership** with all of us in this room (and others) and so I thank you all for being here.

I am incredibly honoured to be the Mayor in a community filled with so many engaged leaders and advocates, who work every day in a wide range of organizations to make our City a better place; and who recognize that our work stands in a long train of **progress** that links it to the work of others who have gone before us.

And you have my commitment that I will continue to lead a Council and a staff that puts these values first and foremost in our work, day in and day out, year in and year out.

Because we are all stronger together.

Thank you.