

**Mayor Cam Guthrie
Inaugural Address
Monday, December 3, 2018**



(check against delivery)

Good evening everyone, and welcome to the inaugural meeting of the 2018-2022 term of Guelph City Council.

I am extremely grateful and humbled to be serving a second term as your mayor.

I would like to thank and acknowledge my family for their tireless support: my son Anakin, daughter Adelaide, wife Rachel, and my parents, sister, brother-in-law and extended family. To my campaign team volunteers, I thank you immensely for your support. All of your sacrifices, encouragement and prayers mean the world to me.

I want to begin by congratulating my twelve colleagues around the horseshoe on your successful election as members of Guelph City Council.

Welcome to our two new Councillors: Rodrigo Goller and Dominique O'Rourke. Thank you for stepping up to serve our community in this way.

Congratulations also to our 10 returning Councillors: Bob Bell, Dan Gibson, James Gordon, June Hofland, Phil Allt, Mike Salisbury, Christine Billings, Leanne Piper, Cathy Downer, and Mark MacKinnon. Thank you for your continued dedication to this city.

We began our election campaigns as 13 individuals – each with our own names on our signs, and our own ideas and perspectives.

But now, as a Council, we become one team. As a team, we must be committed to listening to one another, learning from one another, and harnessing our best ideas to move this great city forward - together.

Members of Council are not always going to agree on every issue. That's the strength of our local democracy. Good questions and good debates make our city better. I look forward to all the questions and respectful debates that will take place in this room over the next four years.

All 13 of us have one very important thing in common: we all put our names on the ballot because we want to serve the people of Guelph.

Council is fortunate to be supported in our work by the City's team of professional staff. This includes our Executive Team: CAO Derrick Thomson, and Deputy CAOs Colleen Clack, Trevor Lee, and Scott Stewart. It also includes the front-line staff who deliver services in our city every day. I want to take this opportunity to thank all staff for the work they do.

It's an exciting time to serve our city.

This term, we will break ground on the long-awaited South End Community Centre. I want to acknowledge Ward 6 Councillor MacKinnon, who has been a strong champion for this Centre. I know he is looking forward to the vision becoming reality.

We will also keep moving forward on the Baker Street redevelopment, including a new main library, which was approved in the last term of Council.

Both of these projects are part of maintaining our city's quality of life as we grow. That's a fundamental goal – and one that I heard every member around the horseshoe talk about during the campaign.

Growth isn't just about homes, businesses, and streets. It factors into many different topics we will consider over the next four years:

- The expansion of our hospital, so that our growing and aging population has the health care it needs. We need to be ready to support this opportunity.

- Reliable Transit, especially Transit that serves employees going to work in employment areas. Councillors Hofland and Allt have been prominent advocates for good transit, along with other members of Council. This term, we will receive the recommendations of the Transit Service Review, and the ball will be in our court to act on them.
- The development of Clair-Maltby, and the vision of what we want our city's southern gateway to be. This is something Councillor O'Rourke has talked about over the past few months – both as a delegate to Council, and then as a candidate.
- The protection of our irreplaceable heritage buildings, and the expansion of our tree canopy and green spaces – both priorities that Councillor Piper has talked about.
- New facilities and services, such as the bicycle skills facility that Councillor Salisbury has advocated for.
- Local control over how we grow - something that Councillor Downer has fought for through her advocacy with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. The Province's scrapping of the OMB was a major step forward.

One of the key factors in quality of life is affordability. No matter how many "best of" lists Guelph makes it onto – if you can't afford to live here, you can't enjoy our quality of life.

We all know young families who are unable to break into Guelph's real estate market and afford that first home.

We need to offer a range of housing choice in the market, so that there is something for everyone.

We need to move forward with projects such as the redevelopment of the former IMICO lands to create affordable housing. Councillor Bell and Councillor Gibson have been strong champions of this project in their Ward.

We need to continue to work with the County of Wellington to find solutions to the lack of social housing in our city.

We need to look at some of our rules to make sure they still make sense for today's families. For example, Councillor Gibson has raised the issue of restrictive driveway widths that no longer meet the needs of families where both parents work, and where they might have an elderly parent or grown children living in the home as well.

And, of course, we need to keep municipal taxes and fees as low as possible. Councillor Billings, along with others, has been a champion of service reviews from the beginning, and I know she will continue to challenge us to maintain fiscal due diligence.

I can't talk about housing affordability, without talking about the growing crisis of homelessness in our city.

I visited the tent city that formed along York Road. I was appalled by what I saw. It is unacceptable that we have people living like this in our community.

A key part of my election platform was supporting vulnerable people and improving community safety. This includes people who are homeless and people who are struggling with addictions to opioids and other drugs.

Councillor Gordon has said this is a crisis that has left far too many people behind. I agree.

There are a number of incredible organizations and groups who have done a huge amount of work on these issues. I want to particularly mention the Guelph and Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination, which was founded by Councillor Hofland in 2009 and has done tremendous work over the years.

Unfortunately, poverty and addictions can lead to crimes like break-ins and thefts. We have seen an increase in these types of crimes in our city. I know Councillor Goller raised these issues during the campaign.

I have already taken a number of actions to deal with this crisis.

I successfully brought motions to the Police Services Board to add more officers, and to develop a plan for technology that will help address these issues.

I have asked staff to explore funding options to continue the Welcoming Streets initiative, which involves an outreach worker building relationships with vulnerable people in our downtown.

And I am creating an Emergency Task Force that will amplify the work already being done by the Poverty Task Force, the Guelph-Wellington Drug Strategy, and front-line agencies. The Task Force will be made up of the people and agencies who are experts in both the problems, and the potential solutions.

The Task Force will be about action – not about talk. It will bring forward measurable solutions to issues that are affecting people in all corners of our city.

I want to conclude by touching on one of the most exciting things that will happen in this term of Council: the creation of our Community Plan.

The engagement on the Community Plan has been like nothing our city has ever seen before. The team talked to thousands of people, to ask about their vision for our city in the years to come. All of that feedback will now become part of a plan for our future. It will be up to this term of Council to receive that plan – and act on it.

Many candidates – including Councillors O'Rourke and Goller – talked about the need to enhance communication and engagement with our community. Not just on the big stuff like the Community Plan, but every day.

I couldn't agree more.

I often host groups of elementary students here in Council Chambers. I always point out to them that there are chairs for City staff; there are Chairs for members of Council – but there are many *more* chairs for the public. That’s because we serve the public. The people are our boss. I will remind everyone what I said four years ago on inauguration night 2014: “We are a city that has a Council, not a Council that has a city.”

Guelph is a city with many impressive assets. Chief among those assets are the people who call our city home.

When we all work together – Council, staff, and citizens – there’s no limit to what we can achieve. I sincerely look forward to working with each and every one of you to seize the opportunities and meet the challenges that lie ahead.

I can’t wait to get started.

Thank you.