

Inaugural Speech of Mayor Sandra Cooper

Mayor's Office

COLLINGWOOD, ON

Today I stand before you, family, friends, colleagues and fellow citizens. It is difficult for me to express the feelings of humility, pride and most importantly excitement that I am experiencing here this morning.

Humbled in knowing that those who came before us have made such significant contributions in building an incredible community we call home. I am honoured that each of you has placed in me, and my fellow Members of Council, your trust and confidence to address the many challenges that lay before us.

I feel such pride in our home Town of Collingwood. I am proud to live here. I am proud that my family enjoys life in Collingwood.

I know we as a Council we are feeling real excitement and a total commitment to building a stronger, more vibrant community for the future generations.

The challenges that lie ahead are many: our collective abilities to address these challenges are strong: the opportunities that will be realized from our efforts are great.

We will continue to grow a community in which our children and grandchildren can be proud.

JFK once said: "Ask not what your country can do for you but rather what can you do for your country". The people of Collingwood have lived this statement for one hundred and fifty two years, and it continues today.

We see it in the founding families who built our Town out of wilderness, in the Shipbuilders that carried our name around the world.

We see it in our newest residents that give so much to our community through volunteer hours at the hospital, helping out with our Public Library or becoming active in the many service clubs and churches, these people make a difference.

Most importantly we see it in the eyes of our children and our children's children, a sincere hope and desire to experience a sense of community, to raise children, to work and to enjoy the fruits of their labour in later years.

I stand before you today and state without reservation, this hope will be realized.

This last election the residents of Collingwood made some clear decisions. Those decisions included ~ embracing our diversity and not focusing on our differences, supporting our industry and commerce not challenging and fighting them in the courts, they chose their neighbours to lead our community.

In short, they chose to build a community in which we all are committed to building a brighter future.

It is important for all of us to understand that our dream will not come easily. Our community has an enormous debt, we have huge infrastructure needs, and our children and our seniors would both like increased services. While all of these wants are important in their own right they can only be supported through sound financial planning.

Well folks that starts today!

As a first step, effective immediately, I will ask our Council to support a full department and expenditure review. We will return to a budgetary process where each and every Member of Council participates. A process Chaired by the Deputy Mayor and conducted in more open format. It is your money you have a right to know how we spend it.

As a second step, I will ask staff to prepare an option paper for Council on alternate legal services.

As a third step, I will ask Council to immediately revoke the By-law pertaining to outdoor patios in the downtown core. Your council, our team, ran on a platform of engaging the public not fighting it. Clearly the men and women that own, operate and work in our many wonderful restaurants have a much better understanding of where their patrons would prefer to sit. Too much time and too many words have been spent on this issue.

As a fourth step, I will ask your Council to review our current approach to working with industry in our community. A sustainable economy must have good paying, full-time jobs that support families, mortgages and education, yes and taxes. Our Council must create an environment where private business and industry thrives through new technologies. My pledge to those in industry and small business is that our Team will make it happen.

The needs of our residents are many and varied. We do need to operate in a spirit of financial prudence. We will need to encourage and examine alliances and partnerships the likes that have never been contemplated in the past. In short, our Team, your Council is going to have to think outside the box.

My promise is simple and straight forward, I will give our community every ounce of positive energy I can muster, I will work with my fellow Councillors in an open, positive and engaging manner, I will make decisions in the same way you would because at the end of the day we all aspire to the same, a stronger, more vibrant and united community.

That is my promise to you and that begins today!

Thank you.