

Warden's Inaugural Address December 12, 2023

Welcome, Council, staff, honoured guests and members of the media. It is with a great deal of pleasure that I address you today.

I wish to thank my mover, Councillor Donohue and seconder, Councillor Murphy and County Council for bestowing this honour on me. You have allowed me to serve as Warden again and I accept the challenge for 2024. We have lot of work to do. I believe, as do you, the office of Warden is an instrument of Council and our community as we work to continually improve all aspects of our community.

It takes a great deal of support to fulfil the role of Warden. Support from Council and staff and the many welcoming and kind residents of the County. I have had support from my family and friends throughout my life acting as Councillor, Mayor, Reeve, Warden and community volunteer. Please allow me to introduce to you my wife, Councillors. Your support and wise counsel has been most welcome and at times urgently needed.

I would also like to acknowledge the staff from the Town of Renfrew. They represent a supportive and innovative team whom I am fortunate to have back stopping me in all of my roles.

As we heard earlier in the year and a bot earlier this morning in 2023 we worked on a number of important projects. The efforts of Council will continue unabated.

Further Twinning of 417

Along with the reinvigorated 417 Advisory Committee and with the support of our community we will continue our conversations with both the Federal and Provincial governments to stress the need for the predictable and timely twinning or the enhancement of Highway 17 through the County of Renfrew and beyond. This is a critical piece of transportation infrastructure which is necessary for the continued economic stability of our community. This highway enhancement is absolutely essential for the future and necessary expansion and diversification of our communities' economy and our ability to compete with the rest of Ontario and beyond. The good news is the Province has finally included the next phase, through from Scheel Drive to Bruce Street in their construction plans. Now we need to continue to remind them to fund it and to start moving rock.

We believe Highway 417 will bring interested companies and investors, visitors and future residents to -our many safe, affordable, caring and welcoming communities. We have observed and documented the positive impacts the extension of 417 to Arnprior has brought to that community and their closely linked neighbour McNab Braeside. We will continue to document the benefits in that area and in other areas on other 400 series highways and advance our case with both levels of government about the importance of the TransCanada Highway system and Highway 17 to Ontario and to Canada.

CNL

CNL for a very long time has been a vital engine which drives our economy. We look forward through our relationship with the Operators to ensure this continues. We expect and our community expects it to remain one of the world's premier nuclear research facility as it evolves.

Nuclear science and technology, research and development and radio-active waste management facilities and a thriving business cluster in Renfrew County is what we expect and will work with CNL and our community to achieve. This is in keeping with what we have observed in other international communities hosting nuclear labs and research.

We accept and support nuclear industry and science in our community. CNL, the laboratories and the science are rooted and belong here. To in any way systematically diminish them is to ignore the glorious and productive past, the significant present value and the limitless future.

Garrison Petawawa

Garrison Petawawa continues to evolve and grow. The many benefits accrued by our community extend beyond the Town of Petawawa. It generates income for many, opportunity to provide services and goods for others and a strong group of volunteers who care about and build our community.

Renfrew County has always and continues to have a strong and emotional attachment and relationship with Garrison Petawawa. We wish to ensure the serving members and civilian employees know they have our continued and heartfelt support as they fulfill their role globally in terms of defending Canada and others, providing security and disaster relief.

We, as always, look forward to the ongoing and mutually benefiting relationship with our Garrison Petawawa.

Culture/Healthy Living

This coming year, we will continue to receive nominations with regards to the Warden's Community Service awards. Recently, we had the great pleasure to award individuals and organizations for their outstanding commitment to making the County of Renfrew a better place to live, work and play.

We reside in a part of the Province, the country and the world, envied by many. Our connection to Canadian history mixed with our evolving social diversity and the vibrant arts community is second to none. Renfrew County residents are fortunate to share our community with the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan community, it is a treasured relationship which needs to be constantly respected and developed.

We will through the carefully fostered partnerships with Ottawa Valley Tourism Association (OVTA) and the various cultural groups work to properly showcase and further develop our unique attributes to residents and visitors alike. I would encourage each and every one of you and your families to take the opportunity to explore the arts, culture and historical treasures we have hidden away and waiting discovery here in Renfrew County.

The County of Renfrew will continue to take an active role in healthy living by participating in a health promotion challenge with Lanark County. The Silver Chain Challenge encouraged the use

of our roads, trails, hallways and any natural or man-made infrastructure to increase physical activity along with social and community engagement. I look forward to June 2024 with enthusiasm and a healthy sense of needing to improve. Our efforts to finish the Algonquin Trail will continue and we will work partners to ensure all of our trails remain an important asset for residents and visitors.

We also work with the Health Unit and a number of partners to improve the physical activeness and health of our community. We value our collaborative relationship with them as we work to ensure our community is healthy and protected during times of illness and worry.

We will work with our community to understand and demonstrate the value of our Public Health system and our local RCDHU. It is time to inform the Province of Ontario about the value and the need to have to remain a locally governed service provider and not one directed from a distant office.

Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus

The Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus (EOWC) sets priorities for the year in January of each year. As Council will recall, the Caucus has been very successful in completing major projects and studies.

County of Renfrew, CAO Craig Kelley and myself will continue to support the efforts of EOWC and ensure the concerns of the County of Renfrew are duly considered.

We will continue to build on the excellence of the VTAC model of care as we take the lessons from the Warming Centre initiative and from our always developing community para-medicine program as we advocate and continue to care for our community.

Housing in 2024 will continue to be a focus for us. This year we will host a housing summit with developers, builders, not for profits and user groups to gather information. I will continue to be a strong advocate for the EOWC 7 in 7 Regional Housing Plan and the financing it will pursue which will assist us in building in our community.

Our Community Service Department continues to be a strong advocate for Housing, Homelessness and our Seniors' Housing Strategy. We value their information and insight as we work to find complete and appropriate solutions with our partners in the community.

Council will continue to speak out on issues of concern. We declared Intimate Partner Violence an Epidemic and we worked to establish a Warming Centre. Our worry, our planning and our responses to assist our community will not diminish. It is however restrained by funding.

In 2024 we will work towards hosting a regional Economic Development Summit and possibly another Queen's Park day building on our very successful day in 2022. These and other actions will be incorporated in our economic development strategy being developed in 2024.

I look forward to continuing our working relationship with our MP Cheryl Gallant, and our MPP John Yakabuski in ensuring the issues of Renfrew County and our local municipalities and our community are duly considered by our senior governments. Partnerships with our Federal and provincial governments are extremely important if we are to move forward on the major initiatives offered today.

Council, through me, requests our staff to please continue to work hard on behalf of our communities. We constantly challenge you to be innovative, informative, thrifty and visionary on a daily basis. Our local Councils depend upon you to be subject experts and assistants in a variety of situations. Residents and clients expect you to assist them, to protect them, to heal them and to advise them. You respond to all of these roles, challenges, requests and expectations with grace and professionalism. You do not disappoint.

Once again, we call upon you to provide thoughtful papers and policy options containing clear goals, costs and comparators upon which we can make informed decisions. We will be taking every opportunity to appear before provincial and Federal bodies to offer policy options when they impact on Renfrew County.

Our community is so fortunate to have the strong efforts of Councillor Doncaster and Councillor Murphy working on our behalf at FCM and ROMA. We will continue to be a strong voice at FCM, AMO and ROMA as we bring forward solutions which will benefit our community and other communities across Ontario and Canada.

This year with local Councils facing dramatically increasing operating costs from policing and electricity to name just a few - we will no doubt be asking about any new or developing different service models and expanded partnerships as no municipality will be immune to fiscal challenges and pressures. Partnership across many fields are the new "revenue producers" for municipal government and we will need to lead and facilitate the discussions on this.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is an honour that I sit here before you as your Warden for the County of Renfrew starting my second term. I understand the immense responsibility you have graciously bestowed on me. I will encourage and work with you to adopt and implement an agenda which allows us to move forward on the issues we have mentioned today and in the past year. Together as Councillors, staff and community members we will continue to make Renfrew County the best place to live, work, invest and play.

Undoubtedly 2024 will be filled with challenges, which as has occurred countless times before in these chambers, will require patience and appreciation for each other and our individual points of view and diverse goals. I am sure we will not always support each other's goals and views, I am confident we will always expect to find ourselves at the end of the session supporting our community.

To each and every one of you, have a wonderful Christmas and I hope an extremely busy, prosperous, and successful 2024.