



## INAUGURAL REMARKS

BY

WARDEN TERRY CLEMENS

December 1, 2011

Good Morning Members of Council, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Welcome to this the 162<sup>nd</sup> Inaugural session of Hastings County Council.

I want to first thank, His Honour Judge Scott for participating in this inaugural session. I believe like my County Council colleagues that these annual events are made so much richer by the participation of distinguished members of the Bench. His ongoing commitment to the administration of justice in our County is certainly widely appreciated.

I also want to acknowledge and thank the members of County Council for affording me your confidence as I take on the duties as Warden—for a second time. It is hard to believe that five years has gone by since I was elected Warden for the first time.

Your continued support means a great deal to me.

I also want to welcome our colleagues Mayor Williams, Mayor Mertens and Councillor Jack Miller. Thank you for coming today. The long and strong relationship that we have built together over the years is something that I and my colleagues certainly appreciate and we are committed to continuing it.

In preparing for today, I looked back on my remarks from 2006. A lot has changed and we have accomplished a great deal as a County since that time.

In 2006, we encouraged our CAO and his staff to push the Family Doctor Recruitment program further and faster. With three candidates enrolled, we asked that they do their best to sign on another three medical students. Well, today as you all know, we have 11 of our 12 spots filled. Of those, four (4) have now set up their practices in Bancroft, Marmora & Lake and Centre Hastings. In the coming year, four more of our family doctors will be setting up their practices across the County.

Earlier this year, the County agreed to free our first participant, Dr. James Larmer, from his contract with us so that he could set up practice in his home town of Brighton. That was the right thing to do for James and for the people of Brighton. All of the funds paid to James were repaid to the County which means we have the funds to recruit in 2012.

I have spoken with our CAO and he is eager along with his very capable assistant John Nicholas, to get out this year and find us another medical student to help fill the need for another family doctor, particularly in the northern part of the County. We wish them well and hope to hear back as soon as possible that they have been successful.

I believe it is fair to say, ladies and gentleman, that this has been one of our most successful projects, one that is making a real difference to the health and well being of thousands of County residents!

In 2006 we were just receiving word that our application for 40 new Affordable Housing units had been approved to try and meet the ever increasing demand. Today, all of the units are built and occupied. We've also added and filled four new units in Marmora last year.

This year we are proceeding with the expansion of safe affordable seniors' housing projects in Deseronto (5 units) and in Coe Hill (4 units). As well, with the \$10,000 SEED grant we recently received, we will initiate the development of additional social housing units in Bancroft

The 4.2 million dollars allocated in the Investment in Affordable Housing funding, will assist in supporting the aforementioned housing projects as well as to assist us to address other housing initiatives still to be determined.

In 2006, we had just received and adopted a new set of strategic directions for our revitalized Economic Development department. The Blais report would become the basis of efforts to build the right conditions for growth

and prosperity across the whole of the County. Included in that road map report were several key recommendations:

1. Hiring an Enterprise Facilitator;
2. Become a Premier Ranked tourist destination;
3. Promote niche market opportunities;
4. Raise the profile of the County as a place to invest;

How have we done?

Well so far so good in my opinion. Earlier this year, we won the prestigious Lieutenant Governor's Award for Marketing Excellence in recognition of our *Communities with Opportunities* investment marketing strategy as the top project of this nature in Ontario. Prior to that award we were recognized by our peers for our *investinhastings.ca* website and our *Economic Development Action Plan*.

More recently, we won a National Marketing Award for the Arts Route Website as an innovative online platform.

While we are thrilled with the recognition, we know that these essential activities are designed to lay the ground work for improved economic development outcomes; things like new businesses and jobs.

So how have we done on this crucial front? In the short couple of years since we re-established the economic development department I think we have a very good story to tell:

*Across the County, excluding the Cities of Belleville and Quinte West, 112 new businesses started up and over 200 new jobs have been created to support these new enterprises!*

The new businesses and the jobs cover a wide range of activities from finance, construction, health care, retail and wholesale trade, to food services. One of the interesting and exciting areas is in the “creative entrepreneur” category where we have seen some real growth. This is an area where I believe the Eastern Ontario Regional

Broadband Network is going to have a real impact. Access to the Internet is a key ingredient in helping entrepreneurs become successful.

The numbers also point to the success of our Enterprise Facilitation program and to the talents of Darcelle Runciman, our Facilitator. We look forward to Darcelle and the program continuing to be a key resource for our budding business community.

However, we cannot take our foot off the economic development accelerator. The key to our County and member municipalities' future prosperity is continuing to develop our business sector and with it the assessment it brings.

Everything we have done to date is about being ready to attract new investment; the strategies, the marketing plans and tools. We should be proud of them.

I also recognize the importance of the small business sector to our growth and prosperity. Fully 81% of all businesses in the County have five (5) or fewer employees. We will continue to support them of course.

But I do want to ensure that together we also continue to work to attract larger businesses.

To help in this effort I have asked our CAO and his staff to undertake two specific activities this year which when executed will assist us in being even more prepared.

First, creating a central inventory of investment ready lands that we can use to help attract new businesses, like manufacturing, is in my view an essential activity for us to undertake here at the County.

Whether it's the Marmora Pump Storage Project, a \$660 million dollar effort, or the proposed Biomass Energy Project in Faraday Township, with its prospective 50 jobs

both the County and local member municipalities must do whatever they can to make these projects happen.

The second action that, having spoken with a number of my County Council colleagues, I believe, can pay real dividends for us all, is to create a mechanism that brings together our local and County economic development resources on a regular basis. To do this, I am asking our Economic Development Manager, Andrew Redden, to lead a formal advisory committee made up of a representative from each of the fourteen member municipalities, preferably your person most responsible for local economic development matters.

This committee should provide specific recommendations and advice directly to the County's Planning and Development Committee in a timely manner, perhaps monthly or bi-monthly. Working with the CAO and the Director of Planning, I am hopeful that Andrew can bring a terms of reference to the Committee for its review and approval at the first or second meeting in the New Year.

I know that both of these new initiatives will take time and require sufficient resources, along with the assistance of every member of Hastings County Council but together we can add these to our economic development tool kit.

We of course do much more here at the County beside economic development and those activities are just as important to our residents and businesses as growing our local economy.

So I want to move onto another key County service. I have been watching the ever increasing demand on our EMS service over the past several years. I want to commend our paramedics led by Chief Socha for efforts to ensure the fastest possible response to calls and the provision of high quality medical services once they arrive on scene.

There is no doubt, I believe, in any of our minds of the key relationship between our service and Quinte Healthcare.

We have worked hard with QHC to try and solve both the frequency of inter-facility patient transfers and the problem of off load delays once the ambulance reaches the emergency department. Improvements in both have been achieved but we cannot, in my opinion, stop seeking further ways to keep our ambulances on the road ready for emergency calls in the community.

While responding to calls for ambulances is critical, Doug rightly points out that with an aging population here in the County, we should be looking for ways to expand our reach into the community to promote health prevention activities that ultimately could help reduce some of the call activity. It's about supporting people where we can in their homes and in their communities.

We are rightly proud of our two long term care facilities, Hastings and Centennial Manors. They continue to be the first choice of many people needing the care provided by our dedicated staff. But we need to be mindful of the increasing workload being felt by our staff as a result of

new provincial reporting requirements that all long-term care providers are experiencing.

Whether it is reporting on High Intensity Needs, Lab Fees, Occupancy, or the new payroll requirements, we are finding it increasingly time consuming and expensive to keep up with these mandatory reporting requirements. To make this more real, in our two homes, over the past year we spent 267 hours, that's about 33 full 8 hour work days completing these reports. While we understand the need for good reporting, the financial burden being imposed upon us without compensation from the Province is unacceptable. This needs to change.

I spoke earlier about the Housing initiatives that the County has completed and is currently working on through our Social Services department but I want to also take a moment to commend our Ontario Works Department on the recent milestone of finding 10,000 jobs for individuals on social assistance across the County through our Employment Connection Program since its beginning in

2007. Finding people jobs, is the best kind of social assistance.

Hastings County has and will continue to be an active member of the EOWC. I am very much looking forward to re-joining the Caucus. In January, we will sit down together with the other members and map out our priorities for 2012.

I believe the state of our province's financial affairs is something that the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus will be certainly monitoring. While times are tough, we still have a collective responsibility to advocate for issues that are key for Eastern Ontario; a permanent roads and bridges infrastructure fund; generating revenue from Crown Lands; ensuring the costs of source water protection are not downloaded; pushing the government for legislative tools that will help us collect unpaid fines for things like speeding or environmental charges which across Ontario now exceeds \$1 billion dollars.

Of course, on the EOWC front, how could I not make a comment about the Eastern Ontario Regional Broadband Network. Our CAO, who is the Co-Lead, tells me that the project to connect homes and businesses across the 50,000 sq kms of our region is on time and on budget! Just last week, EORN announced the last mile contract for the Quinte-Loyalist Zone, in which, the southern half of Hastings County is included. This project will be a game-changer for all of us and we look forward to its full completion.

On the matter of being better informed on the challenges and opportunities that we may face in the coming year, both here at the County and at home in our municipalities, I want to propose to you that we hold another County Information Day. This would be an opportunity for all elected officials in every member municipality, along with their respective senior staff to come together, for a full day, where we can hear about the services provided by the County and what we see for them in the near future. County services touch many of our residents and

businesses and I think that the time is right to inform our member municipalities on how they operate, what their objectives are and what challenges they face.

I also see the day as a chance to raise issues that local municipalities feel, need a collective audience. To do this day right, I have asked the CAO and his staff to work with the County Clerks and Treasurers' Association to put together a draft agenda that we can review here at County Council. I think holding it later in the Spring offers the best chance of getting good weather.

I want to strongly urge, that each of us around this Council table implore your local members of Council to take this day in. With a good turnout, we will have an informative and effective day. I look forward to getting that draft agenda just as soon as possible Mr. Pine!

Before I finish I want to do two things:

First, thank my own Marmora & Lake Council and staff for their support as I take on the Warden's duties once again. I sincerely appreciate their support.

Second, I want to congratulate our new M.P.P. Todd Smith on his recent election. We have always enjoyed a strong working relationship with our Members and I know we will do the same with Mr. Smith. We look forward to sharing our priorities and concerns with him in the coming years.

Thank you again to my County Council colleagues for your support and confidence.

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