



Thank you, Caroline, Michelle and to our local RCMP detachment for your contributions this evening in welcoming and confirming us as the new Council for the Town of Gibsons for the next four years. I especially want to acknowledge Xwechtaal and the Squamish Nation—thank you for welcoming us onto your traditional territories this evening. I further want to recognize Xwechtaal for serving on the founding board of the Gibsons Public Building Society here at the market. It is exciting to me that going back two terms, one of my strongest hopes for the governance of the Market was to engage the Squamish Nation. Xwechtaal was instrumental in that by agreeing to serve on the first board. We see the daily outcomes in that invitation he accepted through the incredible Squamish art at the entranceway and an ongoing presence for the Nation at major events and initiatives that includes Wilson Williams carrying on as the Squamish Nation liaison on the Board today. The Market and Nation together have really modelled reconciliation done right, and we can follow this model on other projects going forward.

For me it has been a long four years since the 2018 election, and perhaps even a LONGER two weeks since the 2022 election. I first want to thank our outgoing members of Council, Bill Beamish and Aleria Ladwig, for their tremendous service to our community during a global health challenge that was surely unimaginable when they were being sworn in on this same stage four years ago... So who knows what is in store for us?

I've realized from reading former swearing-in speeches that it may not be a good idea to make a lot of promises tonight. However, a few themes I'll come back to in the mandate I've promised to our community is that I've committed to being transformative, innovative and positive. So much of this is about mindset. We live in one of the most beautiful small communities in the world and it's no longer any secret. People do want to come here both to visit and to live. House prices and rents have skyrocketed. Traffic has slowed. Some people tell me there are nowhere near enough bike lanes, and others complain that bike lanes are stupid. We've scientifically confirmed only a couple months ago that we have enough water to sustain more than double our current population. This could be comforting, but instead it seems to have alarmed people for a multitude of reasons, perhaps because they don't want to even think of our Town

TOWN OF GIBSONS

"Nature is our most valuable asset"



being double the size that it is now. I don't blame them—one thing that Gibsons really has going for us right now is that I think most of us really enjoy living here, and appreciate our community as it is, despite the rents, the traffic, or whether or not you like bike lanes. Perhaps this is a good place to start in building a positive mindset for our community: Do we not all love living here? I certainly do, and I'm excited to be joined up here with another four people who definitely do, too. In Gibsons we have an abundance of spirit, beauty, creativity, charity and joy.

As far as being transformative and innovative goes, this connects to making local government matter to people. Is it really any surprise that voter turnout has dropped for the second straight election? I don't think so. I know that even for me this past term, I've found Councils everywhere spending more and more time on inward, microscopic matters and less on the big strategic issues that affect everyone's lives. Local elected officials are also burning out. Of our previous term's Sunshine Coast elected officials who had never run for local government office prior to the last election, 62% decided not to run again for a second term. They did not even run and lose—they decided not to run at all after their first experience in elected office. I find this very concerning. I also find it concerning that I tried to encourage younger people to run this time and no matter how hard I tried, the personal scrutiny, the countless hours of thankless work, the cost for their families and the lack of tangible accomplishments are all discouraging good people to run for local public office. (Sorry Councillors, now that you've been sworn in, there is no going back!)

But despite this, our community can be incredibly grateful to have this group of Councillors being sworn in today. My own election results were pretty good... but what I find most remarkable about the election is that only 57 votes, and 4%, separated these four elected councillors, first place from fourth place. It is a resounding statement of support and trust in this group, in this mix of different people and backgrounds, to be representing our community and to make decisions on its behalf. So one of the things I mean about being transformative is to make this important work more viable, satisfying and appealing to people both on and off of Council. We need to engage our residents where they're at, encourage new voices, and cut down on inward-looking and in camera meetings—we need to get out to a larger number of Gibsons residents, bring their input and policy proposals back to Council, and build community.

I've also committed to focusing on the major issues that matter to the people of Gibsons, whether they be housing, climate change, healthcare expansion, BC Ferries or water. Some of these community conversations I want to have need not be limited by local government authority, especially when it comes to climate change, where we all must do our part.

Finally, and relatedly, I've committed to bringing our council, staff and community together onto the same page. I am going to be asking our new Council to focus on the big issues and big decisions, and put its confidence and trust in staff to get the groundwork done. Before the end of this year, we will be setting the level of oversight and management we want to take, and carrying that through consistently for the next four years. To promote organizational health and a productive workforce for our Town, we all need to be one team.

There will be mistakes—there always is—and as Mayor I will take personal responsibility for them; I'll take responsibility on behalf of our community for any critiques levelled at our hardworking staff members, and will take 100% responsibility for responding appropriately and thoughtfully.

The first significant request I am asking of our new Council—and the only thing tonight—is for all of you to get on board and fully back me up in this effort. The election is over. The last term is over. From here on in, we're all working together and we're moving forward—staff carries out Council's decisions every single day, and as a collective Council we're also going to support our staff, for the full four years.

Will getting the community onto the same page be harder? I don't expect everyone in our community to agree (in fact from my experience I've learned to expect the complete opposite), but I will expect and foster civil discourse. You can expect me to be civil, to listen and to problem-solve. As I said earlier, there is so much in this community to unite us. In the coming months, our Council will be diving right into engaging the public in developing a Vision and Strategic Plan, and advancing that Plan for every day forward in a way that has not been done in the recent past. I am a big believer in Strategic Planning, and in developing a Plan that can be embraced by the community, and by our staff. We all need to see ourselves in it.

However, I think it is safe to foresee that one of the focuses of the Plan will be housing. I'm pleased to announce that one of our Council's first formal duties will be to break ground at Shaw Road for the Sunshine Coast Affordable Housing Society's 40 units of new housing, in only a week. Especially after so much work and progress has been slowed down by the pandemic the past three years, I cannot think of a better way to jump-start the Town into building the housing we need, working as a community to take action on climate change, and constructing an entirely new approach to get results from the provincial government on crucial matters such as transportation and healthcare.

I spoke to a lot of people this election campaign, and whenever I could I turned the conversation to what they thought were our greatest challenges and the issues the Town needs to work on. Invariably, the response I got ended with "I don't envy you!" We are, undoubtedly, taking on a heavy load as this time in the history of our town. And we can take it on, together, with the great support that this community has expressed in us. We'll do

everything we can to keep you engaged in our community's challenges old and new, and in decision-making going forward. Thank you to everyone for attending this event tonight, thank you especially to our families, friends and to Town staff for attending, and I look forward to enjoying the rest of the evening, and the next four years, together.

November 1, 2022