

December 6, 2022

## Brian Milne – Warden’s Inaugural Address

Together we are stronger.

When I heard Savanna Myers and Steve Furness's economic development presentation at Council orientation I thought: wow, we are crushing it here in Grey County! New people, new ideas, and new investment alongside the commitment of folks that have been here for generations - truly a winning combination. We need not fear the future.

Together - and with some considerable determination I think - we will strive to keep our sights on the goals set by this council. We, here in this room, are the stewards and beneficiaries of what must certainly be the best county in Ontario, if not Canada.

We are rich in natural resources. Fertile farmland, spectacular landscapes, abundant clean water and air, bracing winters, and the best summers anywhere.

Yes, Grey County is rich in natural resources but what makes this county truly wealthy is the human resources: the people who choose to make this area their home. I see people from every walk of life who are committed to this community. To doing their part. To working to make a better life for themselves and those around them.

Together we are stronger. But, after almost three years of pandemic supply chain issues, a huge employee demographic shift and inflation levels not seen in decades, things have been turned upside down. The cost and ability to supply services, including everything from snow removal to long term care, continues to challenge us.

We are a resourceful, resource rich county. We can master these challenges. It will take focus. And commitment. And courage.

We need to be powerful and persistent advocates for Grey County. We must hold other levels of government accountable. Blindly following and accepting announcements from Queens Park and Parliament Hill is a recipe for disaster. We must push back when necessary. We must be prepared to pound on doors, insist on our place at the policy table and our share of the financial pie.

Ottawa has responsibility for all Canadians. Toronto will do what they think is right for Ontarians. But here in this room, we have only one care: the wellbeing of the people of Grey County. The people who are here now and those who will be in the future.

That means as a Council we must be diligent in getting full value for the tax dollars we collect and spend. We must determine priorities. We can't be everything to everyone and so we must work very hard to do the right things, the best things, to be just and to be fair. We need to be a strong partner with our lower tier governments.

Together we are stronger.

We can look to the past for inspiration and guidance. We have a proud legacy of past Councils asking the right questions and making the right decisions.

More than ever, we need a collaborative approach for the years ahead. We need to start looking over the fences and realizing that what is good for Grey County is good for Owen Sound, or Southgate, or Chatsworth, or Blue Mountains. Conversely, what is good for Grey Highlands, or Meaford, or Georgian Bluffs, or Hanover, is good for Grey County.

In Grey County we have a strong sense of community; of helping one another and those most vulnerable, of thinking about how we can contribute to the greater community and the greater good.

Included in our community, of course, is a strong, understanding and conciliatory relationship with our First Nations partners and neighbours. Continuing to build and strengthen that relationship is important.

I want to thank my fellow councillors for your confidence in electing me to the honoured position of Grey County Warden. Special thanks to my nominators Sue Paterson and Scott Greig. This is a job I am prepared to commit my energy to, so that Grey County continues to grow and prosper.

Final thought: Tradition is a powerful and funny thing.

G. K. Chesterton once said, "Tradition means giving votes to the most obscure of all classes, our ancestors. It is the democracy of the dead. Tradition refuses to submit to that arrogant oligarchy who merely happen to be walking around."

I care deeply about Grey County and the people in it. We should not ignore the history and traditions of our ancestors but we need not be bound by them either.

All of us need to do what is right. Together we are stronger.

Thank you.