



Selwyn (Buck) Hicks 2021 Warden's Inaugural Address Tuesday, December 1st, 2020

Distinguished guests, former Wardens, fellow County Councillors, family, friends, staff and members of the media. I am truly humbled to be in this position again and to have the confidence of my colleagues. I will do everything in my power to bring honour to your decision to elect me as your Warden for a second time. A year ago, I didn't know what a Zoom meeting was. Zoom was what you did when you adjusted your camera or were running late for a meeting. Today, as in this very minute, my wife is in our car outside observing this meeting by Zoom. She told me to find my own way home if I didn't win tonight. Everyone in politics knows that if your spouse or partner is not on board then you need to get off the ship. Barb, I want to thank you for your support and for your love as I pursue this crazy journey in public service. While I'm at it, I want to extend gratitude to all the other spouses and partners out there who sit in the shadows and share their loved one with the public. I want to thank Warden McQueen, his wife and his family for their sacrifice over the last year. Warden McQueen, I know very well what this job entails and the enormous amount of time it demands. Thank you for your service and thank you for including me, your opponent, in key positions on various committees. We don't always share the same position, but we share a love for our community and a desire to make it better.

Next, I extend my gratitude to Councillors Brian Milne and Barb Clumpus for nominating me. I promised my previous nominators cheques and it worked. So, this year I'll promise the two of you double what my previous nominators received. You're welcome! To my children – Selwyn IV, Rylee, Connor and Chloe - daddy loves you very much but he also loves his community. Thank you for sharing.

In my closing remarks for 2019, I reflected on our accomplishments. But most of all, I reflected on just how lucky we are to live in the best country in the world - Canada. Grey County is arguably, hands down, one of the finest places to raise a family in this great nation. We have here a delicate blend of nature, industry and services. I reflect on the preamble to the American constitution which talks about "we the people" forming "a more perfect union". The suggestion is that what they have is great but they are going to work to make it better. That said, what we have here in Grey County is amazing, but of course, there is always room for improvement.

In my 2019 closing address, I talked about the year being about orientation and renewal as our Council, dominated by newly-elected representatives, faced a steep learning curve. We are now two years in. The honeymoon period is over and it's time to roll up our sleeves and tackle the big issues that will mark our legacy. We recently participated, by Zoom, in a visioning exercise led by a very skilled moderator. I very much enjoyed that session. It was a session in which we contemplated the philosophical underpinnings that will guide our decisions. As a member of the Hanover/Owen Sound Task Force as well as the Affordable Housing Task Force, I have been moved deeply by the data that shows how challenging day-to-day life is for far too many in our community. The last year has been especially difficult for our poor and marginalized citizens. We know that there are people in Grey County who spend up to 80% of their income on rent. These are people who deserve to live with dignity. They shouldn't have to choose between heating their homes and buying groceries. It has become clear to me that "affordable housing" has emerged as the number one issue requiring Grey County's attention. WE HAVE WORK TO DO!!

Over the next few weeks, I will ask staff to schedule one-on-one meetings between myself and every County Councillor. Deputy Warden McQueen, if you would be willing and if the other members of the Affordable Housing Task Force agree – I would like you to take over my position as Chairman. You placed a great deal of confidence in me and I would like to do the same for you. Councillor O'Leary, if you would be willing and if the other members of the Hanover/Owen Sound Task Force agree – I would like you to take over my position as Chairman. Together County Council, we are going to knuckle down and commence or complete tangible projects on important matters over the next year. Buckle-up – it's going to be a great ride and together we are going to accomplish great things.

To our multi-talented staff led by one of the finest CAO's in the Province – I am so amazed at how you have performed over the last year. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. You all have a lot on your plates but, over the next year, you may be asked to do even more as we rebound, rebuild return to life with COVID-19 behind us. I want to single-out one staff member. The great one (Wayne Gretzky) once said: "I skate to where the puck is going to be". On that note, you may recall exactly one year ago we heard a presentation from our Economic Development staff where Philly Markowitz unveiled a brilliant marketing campaign built around one simple word - "gather". It was such an inspiring concept. Simple, yet powerful and transformative. It strikes me that after one year of social isolation, the public will be craving opportunities to "gather" in the new year once vaccinations are underway. That's where the puck is going to be. The timing for this genius idea couldn't be any better. Philly, I look forward as Warden to getting behind this exciting campaign. Perhaps Council can receive an update sometime in the new year.

In my last inaugural speech, I left you with words from Canadian rock band – RUSH. Those words are: *“And the men who hold high places, must be the ones who start, to mold a new reality, closer to the heart”*. This year, I want to leave you with words from a British rock band that was popular during my youth – Led Zeppelin. It’s from a song called: Good Times Bad Times. Those words are: *“In the days of my youth, I was told what it means to be a man. Now I’ve reached that age, I’ve tried to do all those things the best I can.”*

Thank you for giving me this honour to serve as Warden for one more year and thank you for listening to me this evening.