

December 6, 2016

## 2017 Warden's Inaugural Address

Good evening fellow County Councillors, family, friends, ladies and gentlemen. Please accept my sincere thanks for your confidence in again electing me to the honoured position of Grey County Warden. Special thanks go out to my nominators, Harley Greenfield and Gail Ardiel, for once again supporting me.

The role of Warden has big responsibilities and I will strive to fulfill them to the best of my ability. I look forward to working with Council, County staff, local municipalities, community partners, provincial representatives and other stakeholders in support of achieving our goals.

I have come to firmly believe that the key to success is teamwork. Only by working together as a united County Council, will we continue to see progress on the many issues before us. As Head of Council, my commitment to you is that I will ensure that all perspectives are heard at the table and that we follow a process that enables us to make good decisions on behalf of all of our residents. Some of the questions before us will be difficult, however we have a responsibility to position Grey County to be a great place to live, work and play, not just for today, but for the future.

As you know, Grey County plays an important role in providing services to our residents. In 2017, we will continue to consider how best to deliver vital supports such as social housing, child care services and long term care. These are all very important decisions and I look forward to working with Council to find solutions that are both responsible and responsive to the needs of our residents.

In the coming year, Grey County will continue to advocate with the province for a funding formula that is fairer to our rural schools.

During my past year as Warden I had the opportunity to see staff embrace collaborative efforts and rethink how to do business better. I look forward to seeing more customer service improvements unfold. Our residents deserve no less. The connecting link portion of the Grey County Transportation Master Plan is a project that I will suggest to council should be considered within this next year.

Library services has been an important topic of discussion in most of our lower tier municipalities in 2016. While the current County Council has not discussed a potential

role for the County in assisting with this service, times change. This is an issue that Council could consider and I will bring this question forward to discuss.

Economic Development has been and continues to be a top priority of County Council. I'm looking forward to seeing the County's investment in economic development unfold and am certain that it will enhance Grey County as an attractive place to invest and do business. The County's continued attention to the needs of our businesses and our labour force, will help to ensure there are educational and economic opportunities for our young people and young families. It will help us to better understand and address the needs of our existing business community and to welcome entrepreneurs and innovation.

Grey County played a major role in developing, championing and ultimately helping to receive approval of funding from both the Provincial and Federal governments of the SWIFT project. This project will improve internet coverage across Southwestern Ontario. There is more to be done. SWIFT is a long range project and our economic prosperity is directly tied to high speed internet access. The County can continue to show leadership and help bring high speed internet to our residents and business sooner. We need to move forward with joint projects with the broader public sector and consider such things as installing the conduit for fibre when we are completing road construction projects.

In 2016 Grey County was honoured to be named one of the top 21 Smart Communities in the world. Early in 2017 we will find out if we are within the top seven. Our participation in the Intelligent Communities Forum global network has allowed to us to learn from the success of others and to begin to develop an innovation agenda that will support our future economic success.

Next year will also continue to see lots of construction activity here at the County Administration building. The building expansion is currently on time and on budget. We will continue to plan for improvements to the delivery of customer services in this new space.

The list of issues is long, and will continue to grow; I am confident in our ability to work together to make the best informed decisions that we can.

Always remember, "We live in the best County, in the best Province, and in the best Country in the world."

My commitment again is "I will do my best."

Thank you again for this honor, I look forward to the year ahead.

Alan Barfoot