

Selwyn (Buck) Hicks
2019 Warden's Inaugural Address
Tuesday, December 4th, 2018

Your Honour, distinguished guests, fellow County Councillors, family, friends, staff and members of the media. Please permit me to express my deepest gratitude for the privilege of your attention for the next few minutes. First, I extend my gratitude to Councillors Ian Boddy and Sue Paterson for nominating me. Your cheques are in the mail. Secondly, I want to acknowledge and thank my wife Barbara for her support and my family for attending this evening. True story – my wife asked me the other day – when you become Warden, can I get a tiara or maybe a sash? Let me just say, I have the best wife – smart, beautiful and obviously, with a sense of humour.

Truth be told, my presence in this position of Warden is pretty unlikely. I never met my father alive. He was a chef in the British military. My mother, a single mother working as a domestic, raised six children. We were dirt poor but we were also fortunate to be living in Canada, a country where the village steps in to help raise the child. Every step of the way, I had great teachers, mentors, coaches, priests, nuns and brothers who lifted me and showed me a path out of poverty. One mentor in particular taught me to dream with my eyes wide open; to never doubt myself and to raise my expectations. What I want for my four kids is the same thing everyone wants for their children. We want them to grow up in village that is vibrant, prosperous and most of all, compassionate. Where there are support systems in place to help them when help is needed. I am hopeful that my example will send the message that in a great democracy you don't have to be privileged to reach high rank. I am proud to live in a community where, rich or poor, man or woman, black or white, we can live with hope, dare to dream and achieve our full potential.

I entered municipal politics with a desire to give back to the community some of what I had received. Faith, community, service and hope are ideals I embrace. By the way, I just love that word 'hope'. Because without hope what do we have? We have an organization in our community called Hope Grey/Bruce. What powerful things you can accomplish when your philosophical underpinning is the concept of hope. Hope of a better tomorrow; hope for joy and fulfillment; and, hope for justice and equality.

Tonight, as I look forward to the future of Grey County, I feel a sense of hopefulness. I feel there is sufficient evidence to support a feeling of optimism. Thanks to the good

work of those leaders who came before us; thanks to our talented staff; and, thanks to our capable and accomplished CAO, we are on the right trajectory with momentum in our favour. When we are recognized internationally for our technological accomplishments when our economic development and tourism staff are receiving accolades; and when I observed a planning staff that, during the recent Official Plan process, demonstrate ‘top shelf’ skills in public consultation, I have great confidence that we are on the cusp of greatness. Together, fellow councillors, we are going to do great things for our village and I am very much looking forward to working with you.

With all of the above said, I don’t want to sugar coat things. Sure we have challenges. We all know that affordable/attainable housing and transportation are monster challenges. Yes, we have work to do. When I see the disparity between the quality of life of our indigenous brothers and sisters and everyone else, I know we have work to do. When I see the greater than average use of alcohol and drugs in our community and when I see the deficiencies in mental health treatment resources, I say, we have work to do. Lastly, when I see the division created by our long-term care debate over the last few years, I say, we have work to do.

Friends, I have taken enough of your time tonight so let me address one final point and then I will conclude. Read any professional magazine and you will see articles addressing the issue of ‘balance in life’. People struggle to maintain a balance between work and play. The County of Grey has traditionally played an important role on the play side of the scale. Today, we enjoy the lowest unemployment rate in the province. That gives us an opportunity to play an equally important role on the work side of the scale. This Warden will be telling outsiders, whether they are domestic or foreign, that you can have it all in Grey County. You can achieve that balance of life here in Grey County. We are more than just the place you come to recreate, although we sure appreciate it when you do that. You can live, work and play in Grey! Most of all, I want people to know that this is a County with a great big beating, compassionate heart.

I’d like to conclude by leaving you with some words that have inspired me since I was a teenager. The words come from a song by a famous 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”*.

Thank you for giving me this honour and I look forward to the year ahead.