

Mayor Tory's Inaugural Address on Dec. 4, 2018

Thank you everyone ... and welcome.

In many cases, welcome back.

In some cases ... such as Councillors McKelvie ... Colle ... Bradford ... Lai ... welcome.

And to our new City Manager ... Chris Murray ... welcome also.

And in all cases ... and to all of you ... thank you.

Thank you for offering yourselves to public service.

Public service, including the holding of elected office is a noble pursuit but it also requires fortitude, endurance and energy.

So let me also thank you in advance for the work we are about to do together.

And ... through you, let me say the same to your families and friends.

None of us gets here without a lot of love and support ...

And none of us stays here ... or stays here effectively and happily at least ... without the love and support of the people who got us here.

I'm sure you're all thinking of those people right now ... or even looking directly at them out in the gallery if they are able to join us today.

For me ... in my own case ... I wouldn't be here without my mother, Liz Tory, my wife Barb and our wonderful children and their families.

I also warmly welcome my sister Jennifer and my brother Michael who have been very supportive.

Members of council are all forced to put up with me here ... a few hours a day ... for four year stretches at a time.

Barb has done it voluntarily ... for a lot longer ... with no summer recess ... and with no end in sight, thank goodness.

I also have to thank my kids ... and I will extend those thanks to your children as well.

They keep us grounded and make sure we never take ourselves too seriously.

Finally, I want to thank my own staff. Both in the mayor's office and from the campaign.

Again, I am sure the members of council would want me to extend thanks to city hall and campaign staff who assist every elected representative in this chamber.

Working with our superb city staff, these are some of the best hardworking people we know.

And some of the most loyal, smart and committed public servants it is our privilege to work with. And they are similarly regarded by the public who they serve and assist on our behalf each and every day.

Two key members of my own team who worked with all of you, and had to work with me, Chris Eby and Vic Gupta have decided to move on and grow their careers.

I am incredibly grateful to them for their public service, and while there may be one or two of you telling them not to let the door hit them on the way out, they have given of themselves in a very generous way and never let either me or the City of Toronto down.

That's enough looking back.

Now, let's look at what lies ahead.

I said on election night that I fully intend to capitalize on the strong mandate given to me by people right across the great city of Toronto ... to put my shoulder back to the wheel ... and help usher in the continued progress our city needs and so richly deserves.

And I meant every word of that.

I know that all of you are here to make progress, too ... so now we have to get down to it.

What does that progress look like?

Above all ... it means thinking bigger.

It means being prepared to make ourselves a bit uncomfortable on some issues so that we can make up for the fact we as a city have not kept up in a number of key areas.

For Toronto to truly remain a global city ... a destination of choice for the world's top talent and top businesses ...

And even more important, for it to remain a great place to live, we have to expand opportunity ... to make our city more livable ... and to make it easier to get around.

Les residents de Toronto ont exprime très clairement leurs priorités – logement abordable, amelioration des transport en commun, maintien des taxes a un prix abordable et sécurité des collectivités.

That means we have to invest in our priorities ... in what our fellow Torontonians have told us are their top priorities:

Affordable housing.

Expanded and improved transit ...

And safe neighbourhoods, which are also inclusive and included.

That's one of the reasons I asked Marcia Brown to be part of this ceremony today – because she embodies that dedication to ensuring everyone is included in the success Toronto is destined to be.

And all of this must be achieved while properly managing the city's finances and keeping life as affordable as we can.

In a perfect world ... the next four years will see continued prosperity ... strong economic growth across Canada and Ontario, led by Toronto as the economic engine ... and that will help us to do our job.

In that regard, I would remind the other governments that our ability to be able to do our job has a definitive impact on the success of the provincial and national economies and thus on our province and our country.

La co-opération entre les gouvernements sera plus importante que jamais si nous voulons continuer a attirer des investissements et des emplois et a maintenir Toronto vivable et abordable.

Despite repeated local and global votes of confidence in Toronto, there are already signs of some extraordinary challenges which will be in front of us all.

I'm thinking of course of an example like our friends and neighbours in the GTA just to the east ... and the planned closure of gm in Oshawa ...

That sad news brings with it a reminder that in a global economy dominated by rapid change, you can take nothing for granted ...

That no industry or sector is safe from disruption.

And that means vigilance and co-operation to understand that change, and strong partnerships to help people and businesses adjust when it comes about.

Government finances are also a challenge – at City Hall, at Queen's Park, and in Ottawa, meaning we have to work harder, and together, to show the public that collectively we are doing our very best for them each and every day.

Here in Toronto, we have a slightly less buoyant real estate market ... land transfer tax revenues aren't growing as we knew would be the case, and interest rates are on the rise.

All of which suggest that we won't simply be able to do things exactly as we have in the past ...

And that adaptation is required of us here at City Hall ...

Just as it has been required in recent years of just about everyone else, including especially the people we serve.

I ask that we all take a good hard look at the new reality we find ourselves in ...

And that we recommit ourselves to working together ...

Even if it takes a few more late nights and early mornings ...

To deliver on what people asked us to do ... what we promised we would do ...

And that is to look out for the long-term health and vitality of this great city of ours.

Thankfully ... on the positive side of the ledger ... we've got a lot going for us.

People are eager to come to Toronto ...

We're having this great moment on the world stage right now where we're considered a cool, welcoming, respectful, caring place to be ...

Young ... diverse ... exciting ... inclusive.

All things that would never have been said of Toronto when I was growing up ...

But words of description the young people of our city are proud of today.

Attributes the world has taken note of as well.

In business ...

And in the arts ...

... In how we treat each other and stand up against hate and discrimination.

There's an energy unlike anything we've seen before.

To keep that going, we have to invest.

We have to build.

We have to keep that momentum going and make certain that it exists and is felt in quite a few places right here in Toronto which the good times have not yet reached.

It comes back to those priorities I spoke about.

If we want young people to stay here and realize their dreams here ... we must make housing more affordable.

Our city cannot afford to let slip away all that talent and city-building energy and have it go elsewhere.

If we want people from every occupation and every income group to stay here and build a strong economy and a great inclusive city ... we must help them find affordable housing and help them to get around.

We've made some good strides on the latter ... historic provincial approvals have been given on the Relief Line and on SmartTrack in recent weeks... We are finally - in the case of the relief line in particular - moving forward.

Never before, after decades of talk, have we made as much progress on actually moving the relief line forward, and with as much consensus about its importance.

The early works on this crucial project have finally begun after decades of just talk.

But if you spend any time on the transit system, as many of us do, you know there are too many people on the subway platforms ... too many packed onto the trains ...

To say nothing of the traffic streaming downtown from everywhere around.

We've got to do better.

No one should be frazzled and stressed before they get to work, and then spend the day dreading the trip home.

It's not productive or liveable.

We can do better. And we will.

If we want people to walk around confident and secure ... we must make our communities safer.

All of us went to too many vigils and memorials last year and shed far too many tears over lives cut short.

That has to stop.

We need our partners at other levels of government to support us as they have significantly begun to do ... but we also have a duty as city leaders to do our part to tackle gun violence ... and the causes of gun violence ...

So that our people ... in our city ... feel safe.

In the coming days another new class of police officers will sign on, bringing us closer to the deployment of 200 new officers for 2018 which I committed to during the campaign.

And we won't stop there.

The Chief and the Police Services Board are working with us to free up the time of our uniformed police officers in many different ways so they can be on the front lines and in the community in significantly increased numbers, with new initiatives expected in the weeks to come and we will hire again in 2019.

With Council's support, I will honour my commitment to match the provincial funding announced by the premier earlier this year and to use those funds to add more neighbourhood officers and expand vital community-based initiatives which invest in kids and families.

I am committing today again with the anticipated support of this council that we will take steps necessary to close any gaps in the youth equity strategy, so we ensure that we continue to provide positive pathways and hope to those who are growing up in more marginalized circumstances.

Those young people, together with their families, need some extra support from their city government and from their fellow Toronto residents, and they will receive it.

A look in the mirror for me and I suspect most councillors will tell us we must invest more in support for families that are struggling so that they and especially their children will have that greater sense of hope and be able to put their obvious talent to work so as to share in equitable access to the opportunity that is Toronto.

My determination to lead in the process of doing more for those communities is absolute.

Of course, we've got to do all this responsibly and affordably.

There are all kinds of families out there that know how to put a dollar to work for themselves ...

Who watch their budgets closely ... and make smart decisions.

We owe it to them to do the same with the resources they have given us.

That is a big challenge for all of us but it does speak to affordability in a big successful but expensive city, and the people have said loud and clear that affordability on a number of fronts is an issue they expect us to address, including their tax bills.

Finally, I would like to address myself to how I hope we can go about things in this chamber.

Putting aside for this moment how we got here in this number, I hope in the cause of showing the best of local government, the best of Toronto and the best of the talented people elected to this council, we will be able to discharge our duties in a way the people can be proud of.

I never see more heads in any room nod than when I say the people we represent are happiest when they see their elected representatives working together.

City councillors working together, and all three orders of government co-operating to get things done.

My job carries with it a special responsibility to try to meet the wishes and carry the confidence of what someone once described as "the whole people."

The system here was founded on collaboration and co-operation, adaptation and evolution but it is ultimately judged by what gets done.

The City of Toronto is a magnificent place of opportunity and example, but it is also becoming increasingly complex by the day, home as it is to a population which has dramatically different experiences of life.

I understand that, and pledge to try my very best to speak for and to act for that "whole population," difficult as that may be.

And I urge colleagues to work with me, harder than ever, to resist the politics of division which seem so prevalent today in so many places.

We don't have to divide and polarize here.

Our purpose is to continue to create a place where we bring people together, where we build a city for everyone, a city of opportunity, and where we do it together.

We're all about lifting people up here in Toronto, not dividing them or putting them down.

Tomorrow, the real work begins again and I know we are up to that challenge.

On behalf of all of my colleagues I thank all of you who have taken the time to be with us today.

And again on behalf of all members of council, I thank the people of Toronto for entrusting us with their well-being and the well-being of a city we all love.