Honorable Justice Nightingale, members of council, friends, family and staff. I can’t believe that I sat here 8 years ago for the first time. For those of you new here today, this place is known as the “Big House”. You will soon learn that here, the convictions of many are heard, the passions of our unique communities are brought to the forefront. The energy both positive and negative can have lasting impacts on what is debated here. Most importantly however the process by which we forge our future is established right here in this place. It is truly the house of Haldimand and it doesn’t just represent the people, it is home for this new council.

Tom, I am so happy that once again for the third time you are here tonight to share your prayers and kind thoughts for this Council. While you have left this County for several years now, your spirit and passion is still here in these halls to inspire us.

I want to take this time to acknowledge the commitment and the determination of the past Councillors in Wards 1, 2, and 3. Leroy was a man of consistent principles and never waived from them. We always knew his position especially on granny flats. I will be forever indebted to Leroy for his guidance and direction in my early years as Mayor. Fred, was a quiet man with tremendous skills and his dedication and commitment in everything he does is a shining example of what everyone should aspire to. Lastly, Craig, a true representative in every sense off the word. Craig’s middle name is community and he is one of those rare individuals that embodies the true sense of those that shape and mold the places we live in and make them better places for all.
We all, at this table have a best before date and elections are not always a reflection of one’s work or even the candidates choosing to run for the first time. It is a decision by the community at large at specific time to determine who will sit around this table to speak for them over the next four years. This year the electorate spoke and I want to congratulate Stu Patterson, John Metcalfe and Dan Lawrence for putting your name forward and facing the scrutiny of the public. You passed the first test, winning the election. It is a testament to your character and your perseverance along with your ability to work with many people. All traits you will require as we move along in this coming term. I particularly want to thank Dan for making me the youngest member of Council.

I want to welcome the rest of you back. Your win and your determination through the election process demonstrates your continued connection to your respective communities. You have mandates from your wards and that serves you well for the upcoming years that we will share together. It further gives us the confidence in making decisions that you truly represent the interests of your Communities and all of the County.

To the people of Haldimand, I thank you.....for your faith, your consideration and for the confidence that you have bestowed upon me once again. For the second time I have been given a strong mandate with better than 50% of the vote from the public. I humbly accept that, as you believe in my leadership and further I respect it, as I have been hired to represent you and it comes with great responsibility, that I do not take lightly.
Over the past eight years I have met with many people, spoke to them about their concerns and about what was dear to them. I asked them for their endorsement, their trust, to believe in what it is that we were doing. I was asking people to embrace change and welcome it with an open mind.

While I took for granted that change is not easy for most, we have endured some of the most dramatic and sometimes traumatic changes in our day to day lives than ever before. Change is a constant that does not wait for society to catch it, it simply moves along without prejudice or thought. The challenge that many of us face is preparing ourselves to accept and adapt to the changes and incorporate them into our surroundings. Haldimand County has not been isolated by change both local and and more globally as to how it impacts our way of delivering services. You simply need to drive through our County and this change is evident everywhere.

Over the years I have been very fortunate to be surrounded by some very good people. I want to thank all of them, who quietly or not so quietly helped me in this election, throughout my time as Mayor before in the past and know into the future. I truly believe that while many factors can be attributable to one’s individual success, the people you surround yourself with is the single most important ingredient to anyone’s success. My list is very long and I will not bore you all here tonight with those I need to thank, but Aubrey and Donna who are sitting here tonight, they have been with me since the beginning of my political career. You both have faced the good, the bad and and ugly and stood strong for me when I needed someone to vent on.
I am fortunate to have the family that I do, not everyone draws a winning ticket when they are born and I can say that I won the lottery with my parents.

To adopt their ethics and their humbleness, their selfless love and compassion for others. To try to keep up with my mother, well I try anyways. They are shining examples and role models for anyone to follow. They are currently away enjoying a well deserved holiday, oddly enough the same time four years ago. However, their unwavering support has been instrumental in my desire to push forward. That said I am so fortunate and proud to share this experience with my daughter Madison. A guiding light that is always there for me. Thank you.

Over the past eight years, I have grown as a Mayor, as a person, a father and recently I have had the good fortune to meet my partner, Sandra. She has accepted the role and unconditionally supports me in whatever I choose to do, and I cannot thank her enough for that. I am very lucky to have her in my life. She knows how passionate I am and while I continue to push her outside of her comfort zone, she continues to let me be the person that I want to be. I love you for that and I thank you.

Each of us have declared this evening before the Honorable Justice Nightingale, before our peers, our neighbours, our friends and our family that we will faithfully and impartially exercise this office. You now have an office and it is not just an exciting opportunity to engage in learned debate, or to offer new ideas for the advancement of Haldimand County - it is an awesome responsibility of service to others. It is an honour and it is an immense privilege.
We will consult, we will debate, and we will deliberate. At times we will disagree, at times we may falter, but we will never waiver in our commitment to perform our role to the best of our ability.

Our consultation with the people of Haldimand County and our debate around the Council table will be conducted with the respect befitting the dignity of the office we assume today.

This election has reaffirmed that Council is on the right path, value for tax dollars is of the utmost priority and it is our duty to continue to ensure that value is being delivered.

With the newly created Economic Advisory Committee, along with the other Committees, made up of leaders in this County, we will look to them for guidance and for validation in the difficult decisions that must be made to ensure that this Council is still on the right path.

I will be looking to recommend a new committee primarily focused on our youth, tomorrows leaders. An advisory committee that will meet monthly to discuss issues that are important to youth and where these students will learn the power of involvement and know the satisfaction of affecting positive change in their community. For how can we properly plan for our future without the active engagement of those who are the future.
I am firmly committed to the idea of ensuring high speed internet service to all areas of the county, recognizing that this is a fundamental basic need for all of us to survive the demands and changing work environment that primarily exists now, at home.

I have met with each of you individually to understand your priorities for this term and how they can best work to achieve our shared vision and common goal. It started eight years ago and it will continue to be the theme this term, following our three pillars, providing high exceptional value while managing our financials to ensure the long term sustainability of both our assets and our workforce. This term we will mark the opening our new Admin building, a new beginning. A new and more efficient way of providing services to the people of this County and while we continue to change with the needs of our growing communities, we will always remain consistent to our principles and our values that have steered us to date.

The road to success is always under construction......an interesting quote I stumbled across but one I believe that is appropriate for us here today. I have learned that we must be prepared to go where others choose not to. As leaders it is our duty to take people into the world of uncomfortable and to help guide them along that rough road of uneasiness to ultimately get to where we can all celebrate success, making Haldimand County a great place to live, to work, and to play.
As in the past we will continue to be leaders amongst our peers, we will continue to be beacons for them to measure our successes against, and we will continue to give our staff the range and freedom to openly express themselves, to grow in a barrier free culture. A culture looking for cutting edge thinking, a culture that breeds energy not contempt, a true family in every sense of the word. A culture that sees “can’t” as a challenge not a closed door.

As your Mayor, I will continue to lead by example, my choice in leadership that has worked for the past 8 years will be consistent in this term. My style of leading from behind and building consensus will continue. I will be looking to each of you on Council to accept your roles as leaders in your respective communities and have the full confidence that you will represent them and their beliefs here, and vice versa represent us just as respectfully in the public when faced with public adversity. We are all just one vote, but we are a team and it is our duty and it is expected that we function as a team, ensuring that debate is healthy, it is constructive and most importantly it is productive to help us achieve what so many have entrusted in us. I am inspired and I am so fortunate as I look around this table and see the strength sitting here. I truly believe that this council will meet the challenges that it faces in the next four years. PAUSE
Years ago, I failed to understand what I was asking of the public when I asked for their vote of confidence to be their Mayor. I truly did not appreciate the magnitude of responsibility that is placed on Council and myself as Mayor.

Today I sit here with even more pride but greater humility as I have clearly gained that understanding and more importantly the knowledge to steer and lead the County along that road under construction. I am truly excited about the next four years let alone the future of Haldimand County, and we all here have front row seats to witnessing the positive changes that are going to make Haldimand, a great place to work in, the very best place to live in, and an exceptional place to play in. So, let's roll up our sleeves, and get to work, it is time for us to write the next chapter.

Thank You

Ken Hewitt