



Her Worship, Shelley Ann Bentley, Mayor of Haldimand County Inaugural Address

The Honourable Justice Robert Nightingale, Pastor Devries, Mr. Yates, Mr. Manley, Mrs. Eichenbaum, Councillor Shirton, Councillor O'Neill, Councillor Metcalfe, Councillor Lawrence, Councillor Stam, and Councillor Patterson.

Good evening everyone and welcome to the inaugural meeting of the 2022-2026 term of Haldimand County Council. On behalf of members of council and myself, I would like to thank you for joining us for this special occasion as a new council for the County of Haldimand takes office.

I am extremely grateful and humbled to be elected to the Chair of Mayor.

I would like to thank my family and friends for their continued support throughout the campaign and entering my new role, to my husband who spent tireless days, sacrificing his favourite time of the year to be with me every step of the way. There are no words to express the appreciation and love I have for you. Special thanks to Murray and Darline Kinnear who worked tirelessly on the campaign. I thank you immensely for all your support, your sacrifices, encouragement, and prayers. It means the world to me. I would like to pay tribute to my mother Kay Peacock and my sister Sharon Bentley. Without them, I would not be where I am today. They instilled hard work, determination, and dedication in me, and for that I am eternally grateful. I know they are both in heaven sending their blessings.

I would also like to recognize our municipal staff who work so diligently on our behalf but are not commended enough for all the work they do. Thank you all. I was fortunate during this campaign to meet the wonderful people of Haldimand who sent words of encouragement, prayed for me daily, and continue to do so.

As I'm sure everyone in the audience appreciates, it takes a lot of fortitude and determination to put yourself out there in pursuit of election to municipal office. To those individuals who were unsuccessful in this election, thank you for your dedication to our community through your willingness to run in the election and undergo the public scrutiny inherent in the process. Please remain involved through some measure of service on another level, be it a committee or another volunteer organization. We need you!

None of us on this council tonight got here alone. I would like to thank the husbands, wives, partners, children, and the volunteers of your elected officials whose support during the election and for the next four years has been, and is, so important. You too have made a difference to the community through the support and patience you have and will provide.

Congratulations to Stewart Patterson on being acclaimed. Congratulations to Rob Shirton, John Metcalfe, and Dan Lawrence on their re-election. Congratulations to Patrick O'Neill newly elected for Ward 6, the youngest member of our team. Congratulations to Natalie Stam to be the first woman elected to council; it's quite the honour.

The people of Haldimand have spoken, and they seek change. Let's all work together to give the people the change they have requested. We need to look forward. We have a mandate from our constituents to work as a team to bring their concerns to the table and act on them in a way that benefits the entire community.

I am committed to Haldimand County as your mayor. I promise to make our government more inclusive, transparent, open, and accountable to you. There is no I in team. I look forward to working with the new council.

Moving forward, we will look at our infrastructure and better ways to communicate. We need to plan and provide space for future business development while also planning access to health care, schools, farmland, and green spaces.

Leadership is a responsibility; it's not about being in charge. It's about taking care of those in your charge.

As Mayor, I am eager to be a strong advocate for our municipality, working with our provincial and federal counterparts to have positive, open discussions with our indigenous communities. By listening, communicating, and welcoming your ideas we can all make Haldimand County a great place to live, work, and play.

Titles or positions don't make leaders. Leadership comes from the heart, a heart for the people, a heart to serve, respect, love, compassion, and empathy for people. A leader is a servant. Without people to lead, no one can call themselves a leader.

Through teamwork, leadership, and dedication we can use each day to learn and grow on our path to success.

As your Mayor, I promise to work for a better future, one that makes sense and includes everyone. Let's all move forward together.

Thank you.