



MAYOR DREW DILKENS

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

MONDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2018
ST. CLAIR COLLEGE CENTRE FOR THE ARTS
CHRYSLER THEATRE
7:00 PM

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Good evening and thank you.

Thank you to Neil, Theresa and the Windsor-Essex Youth Choir for participating in tonight's celebration.

I am so happy to be with you tonight.

I'm thrilled to be able to continue the opportunity afforded to me to lead our city for the next 4 years.

I continue this role with strong enthusiasm and belief that Windsor is on the right track, and moving in the right direction.

As always, I'm going to be honest with you. I will share with you what both my heart and mind are saying.

And my hope for you tonight – is that you leave here feeling good about our City and its future.

But I too hope you'll leave here with the sense of urgency I feel at this moment.

In preparation for these remarks I printed off my speech from 2014 to re-read what I had delivered to you at that time. Yes, I re-read all 39 pages.

And I thought to myself why did you put the audience through that Drew? You were new, but 39 pages, what the heck were you thinking?

And despite the fact that those 39 pages were in 24-font for public speaking purposes I just kept thinking of one person.

Abraham Lincoln.

You see, one of the most famous speeches ever given by a politician is the Gettysburg Address which Lincoln delivered on a November afternoon in 1863. You know the one that starts with *'Four Score and Seven years ago...'*

It's 271 words long. And at 24-font would take-up about 2 pages.

And I thought to myself – I have to do better. These remarks need to be more Lincoln-esque. Brevity must prevail.

And although the beginning of Lincoln's end started in the balcony, in a theatre much like this one – let tonight be the start of our new beginning.

Tonight is a special night.

It's special for the elected officials who've worked very hard, spent lots of money and knocked on thousands of doors – and convinced residents across this city that their ideas and 'spirit of cooperation' are the best to move Windsor Forward.

It's special for the families, friends, and volunteers who worked hard to support each Councillor behind me this evening.

Those City Councillors who are returning know how important this support is in accomplishing the difficult job that lays ahead.

Those who are new, let me just smile, and say, welcome to the team. You're about to find out how important family support is and who your true friends really are.

Tonight is also important for our beloved City. She's the reason we all coalesce here – and now.

It's important to her, as all of us, together here, in this place, at this time are responsible for her destiny.

We are charged with governing this complex \$800m beauty that employs 2500 of our neighbours, and who on a daily basis, touches the lives of every single person within her borders – and even many beyond her borders.

Yes, our City of Windsor has a storied past. From the Hurons to Louis Vailaire, to General Brock and Chief Tecumseh, from Henry Ford, The Dodge Brothers and Gordon McGregor, to Hiram Walker, Harry Hatch and yes, even Al Capone.

Over the years, we've transformed metal into something meaningful, and boy have we transformed a lot of metal.

We've also filled a lot of bottles with liquid gold.

And we've put more salt on kitchen tables and winter roads than most care to think of.

And we've also sent all those products around the world for more than a century.

We're good at what we do.

The combination of these things has led many in Windsor and our surrounding communities to build a life of prosperity for generations. To afford a house, raise their kids, provide them opportunities, and then retire in comfort, in a safe place, once the heavy lifting is done.

And through it all – especially in the last 40 years – we've been on a roller coaster of ups and downs.

Over the past few years, many felt as if our city was scaling the highest point on earth – Mt. Everest. We saw Windsor's economy out-perform most other locations in Canada with a rebound in manufacturing and an influx of investment from abroad. Bidding wars are now the norm on residential properties in Windsor - something never seen in my lifetime.

There is a great sense of excitement. People are buoyed by a turnaround that we all felt may never happen.

And that's because in that same 12 year period, we had sunk to what felt like the lowest point on earth. In the midst of a great-recession where local unemployment had reached almost 16%. Our largest employer was on the verge of bankruptcy. Cases of social assistance and unemployment rose dramatically. Parents - out of desperation - left their families here and commuted to Alberta to work in the oil and gas sector.

People you'd never expect to ask for a hand-up – had to extend their arm for support.

But even in those darkest hours - we learned how to cope and adapt. How to support one another and bring forward the best that I've seen in our city. What I saw here made me think of how our city – under the leadership of then Mayor David Croll – pulled together during the Great Depression – and despite a lack of money and on the verge of becoming insolvent ourselves, we made it through and became better. That Windsor grit and determination found a way.

And the parallel of feeling as though we had reached the lowest place on earth, and what actually happens there was striking to me.

You see, the lowest point on earth is the Dead Sea – a body of water between Israel and Jordan - and it's called 'dead' because it's uninhabitable to any fish or wildlife due to it's high salt content.

But the parallel to this story really occurs when you jump into the Dead Sea. Because of those high salt levels – you simply cannot sink. You float as though you're wearing a life jacket even though you're completely unencumbered.

Even when you're at the bottom of the earth – even in the middle of a body of water – no human can sink. Nor could anyone – in our darkest hour - sink our spirit – the Spirit of Windsor.

Now, I've referenced the Dead Sea in the Holy Land, and now seems to be the right time for me to have my 'come to Jesus' moment with you.

Tonight – I had planned to give you a traditional inaugural speech. One that any Mayor of big city in Canada could write. A speech that almost any other mayor could take, change the name of the city to be their own, and deliver it without reservation.

In fact, I had started that speech last weekend.

Then earlier last week we all received the news that General Motors had decided to close several plants in Michigan, Ohio, and the one up the road in Oshawa, Ontario.

And after reading the details and listening to the commentary, I knew this decision was different than most.

GM wasn't closing plants to send work to Mexico or China.

They weren't closing plants whose quality was insufficient.

It wasn't like the 2010 closure of the Transmission Plant in Windsor – where we were in the midst of the recession and they consolidated operations in St. Catharines.

Friends, GM is closing these operations to save \$6 billion dollars and to focus on autonomous and electric vehicles.

Some economists hailed the decision as a good one citing GM's decision to 'inflict pain while the economy is good', as opposed to doing this during a recession.

They said there's a tight-supply of skilled labour who will easily be able to find opportunities in Alberta, BC, or even the GTA – which is an hour from Oshawa.

And they're probably right.

It's likely the impact of this closure in that area will not cause much overall disruption to the economy of that area – but will undoubtedly lead to great disruption for the 2,500 families affected. They were thrown in the Dead Sea – but they will float.

And as the pieces of this story came together last week, I couldn't help but think, 'What if that happened here?'

Shortly after my election as Mayor in 2014 I was asked by a reporter, "what keeps you up at night?"

My immediate response, "the thought of my largest employer closing."

You see, that was less than a year before Sergio Marchionne announced FCA would invest \$1bn into the Windsor Assembly Plant and build the new Pacifica here.

Provincial leaders of the day were having a public war of words about corporate welfare – and to his credit, and because of his connection to Windsor, Sergio Marchionne said, the heck with the province, we are going to build this vehicle in Windsor.

He called the Windsor Assembly Plant – '*The heartbeat of the city*'. And he was right.

I was told at the time that this product would have a 10-year lifecycle. 10 years – or 2025, before another major investment would be needed to re-tool the plant for a new model or a new product.

This is a plant that employs 6,000 of our family, friends, and neighbours. And with the estimated 9-1 spinoff for every job in the plant – well, you can do the math to appreciate the impact of this employer.

The heartbeat of the City.

Ladies and Gentleman, I have a vivid recollection in my memory that I need to share with you this evening.

In 1979 I was a 7-year old kid. We lived in a decent middle-class house on St. Patrick's Drive in South Windsor. Life seemed easy – I wanted for nothing and felt like I had everything.

I can recall very few details of what happened in my life that year. I do remember 1979 was the year when I learned roman numerals with Ms. McEwan, my second-grade teacher at Bellewood School. But beyond that I have only one other specific memory that I can recall.

I remember walking out of my bedroom, down the hallway where I joined my family who were standing nervously in the kitchen. My parents and 2 older brothers huddled around the 16 inch black and white TV we got from S&M by collecting stamps from N&D.

You see, my dad worked for Chrysler Canada as a pipe fitter, and times weren't good at Chrysler.

They were on the verge of bankruptcy and we all waited with deep trepidation for the news from Lee Iacocca on whether he had been able to secure government funding from President Jimmy Carter.

Without such funding, Chrysler would surely close, and my dad would be without a job.

And you know what happened - the money came through and Chrysler was saved.

My parents exuded a sign of relief, the likes of which I hadn't seen before.

The magnitude of which I didn't fully comprehend until I became a parent myself.

And the weight of which I never felt until you graciously elected me to be your Mayor.

And I know, like you know, that if today, our largest employer needed to pivot production to deal with a recession, or a change in corporate focus, or a change in consumer demand, or to meet shareholder expectations, **AND** that change involved closing the Windsor operation – we'd all be in trouble – the likes of which we haven't seen locally since 1929.

The days of relying on federal or provincial government intervention to save these jobs, like they did in 1979 and again in 2009 are disappearing.

And we need to be ready for a day when this scenario could happen.

I know this is uncomfortable for most people to think about. I know we like to think it could never happen – but we must think, talk and prepare for this possibility.

Our geography doesn't afford us the flexibility found between Oshawa and Toronto. For most workers in the plant, the border is an employment barrier and the next real major market is 2 hours away.

Our size as a city doesn't give us the flexibility to transfer the skills of that many displaced people to other local employers.

In short, there would be a vast hollowing out of Windsor if our largest employer closed today. People would have to leave the community to find gainful employment and sustain the life they've been accustomed to living.

Now I want to be very clear. Let no one leave here thinking FCA has given any indication, signal, or message that our local operation is in jeopardy. They have not.

We are proud of this facility and we will continue to do everything we can to help our largest employer be successful. We appreciate the trust they place in Windsorites to build a great product. And a great product they build.

But ladies and gentlemen, we need to start planning **as if** we've just been given notice that 2025 is the year this plant will close.

We need to operate with a sense of urgency to re-shape and re-mold our local economy. We need to triple our efforts in economic development to fast-track the diversification of our economy.

We need the 'shock-absorbing effects' provided by diversification in the event of a major change in Windsor.

We also want to create opportunities for our young people to stay and enjoy the Windsor lifestyle that everyone here understands and appreciates.

We will have to let our proverbial 'cat out of the bag' and share our great story with people across this land and around the world.

Now, we've had some tremendous success stories these past four years with Kauth, APAG, AAR at the airport, and of course Quicken Loans coming to downtown Windsor in just a few months.

We are getting our message out but the City will simply have to put more resources into this effort to be successful.

Let's just do the math – over this past term we've announced some 600 jobs created from the companies I just mentioned. But we're trying to buffer 6,000 direct jobs in the plant of our largest employer. Don't forget the 9-1 job spinoff that experts believe occurs from each job created by an OEM. That formula leads us to 60,000 jobs in Windsor that rely on our FCA operation. If you divide 60,000 by 600 it will take us 100 years at our current pace to replace the value of those positions.

Even if you want to dispute that number, cut it in half and say that 30,000 jobs rely on the Windsor Assembly Plant. We still need 50 years to buffer that many positions.

Heck if the experts are way off course, cut it in half once more – and we're down to 25 years.

And even if you're a doubting Thomas, simply divide 6,000 by 600 and we need 10 years to replace the jobs in question.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I have breaking news for you tonight. I won't be your mayor in 10 years from now. But if history in our city dating back to the 1930's is predictive of future decisions – one of the people sitting behind me tonight will be. And God help the Mayor who is faced with the prospect I've described for you.

My commitment to you tonight is simple.

I will do everything within my power to ensure no Mayor and City Council has to face this prospect.

I will lead this City Council to get us to the place we need to be as a city, so that families need not contemplate where to move to find employment.

Our former City Engineer Mario Sonego said it best. When given the Herculean task of completing a number of major projects by a seemingly impossible deadline during the Great Recession he said, "He'd get it all done or he'd die trying." And to his credit, he got it all done.

And by working together, we can too.

We won't be able to get this work done without the help and support of some strong partners.

First, we will need the support from our regional partners in Essex County and the new Warden of Essex County. Over the past 4 years we've started the bones of regional transit by adding service to LaSalle and we'll start delivering policing to Amherstburg in 28 days. You and I both know we will only prosper as a region when we really start working together that way. There is much more that can be done that would free-up valuable resources that could in-turn be directed to priorities like economic development without our adjacent neighbours losing their unique community characteristics. We need to work with them to get there. And we will.

We have great partners in the University of Windsor and St. Clair College. We are very fortunate to have both institutions in our City and I consider both to be important players in our ability to deliver on our commitment to you.

President Patti France at the College, thank you for your continued collaboration and your reasonable approach to problem solving. I look forward to doing more great things together.

Interim President Douglas Kneale at the University of Windsor has also been a strong advocate for partnership with the city and I look forward to continuing our strong relationship moving forward.

Both organizations have invested heavily in our downtown – and those investments are starting to make a real difference.

Patti and Douglas are here – and I thank you both for joining us tonight.

Our partners in health care have been great to work with too – thank you David Musyj and Jan Kaffer. We have so much more to do as we work on the delivery of new health care in Windsor-Essex while also dealing with issues related to mental health and drug addiction that are affecting communities across North America.

We need the Chamber, the BIA's and all other organizations who care about this city to step-forward and work with us and help transform our economy. Times here are good – we must act now. We can't wait for the next recession to happen and hope we can effect a turn-around then. It just won't work.

To my colleagues on City Council. We will have some tough decision to make over the next four years. The good news is, we've employed a great amount of discipline over the last 15 years – discipline that has put us in a strong financial position to take some bold steps.

There will be challenges and heated debates about how we move forward and how we identify priorities.

Yes, we need to prioritize flood mitigation efforts, development of our area neighbourhoods, key road projects that help drive and sustain growth, and capitalize on core assets like our airport, new border crossing and new regional hospital.

And as we move forward to continue creating an attractive and affordable community that drives investment, remember that our approach must be disciplined, strategic and focused. We must find the balance among interests that is essential to operating a healthy city.

And the health of our city is precisely what's at stake right now.

But the one thing I know is that we are resilient. Windsorites stick together. We help one another. We support one another when the chips are down, and we build each other up when times are good.

We pivot, we adapt, we adjust as needed – not without the pain of change – but with the purpose of prosperity.

2025 is coming fast. It will be here before you know it. Tonight is the call for 'all hands on deck'.

It's the 'rally cry' that says this community is going to prepare. We are going to get ready and do what it takes to ensure "the WIN" stays in Windsor.

My kids are here tonight – they are 14 and 17. And like every parent, I want what's best for them. I want to see them succeed – here at home. I want them to stay and have opportunities available. And if they want, to live the Windsor life. An incredible life in a good sized, safe city, with all the main amenities found in places like Toronto - just 2 km away. And like most parents, there's nothing we wouldn't do to help our kids.

So whether it's the spirit of a parent helping their child, or the passion felt when cheering on the Spitfires. Whether it's the gratitude you feel upon reflection of a full life spent here, or the appreciation you have for how far we've come.

Whatever motivates you – whatever calls you – whatever fuels your love for this community - We need to harness that incredible energy and let it drive us for the next four years to accomplish what others think to be impossible.

Let us change the conversation about our future. Let us change the mindset that others have of us. We need to show them the new Windsor and show them what we can do.

You heard me talk about Kauth - the German company that is setting up their North American Headquarters in Windsor and hiring 300 people.

It took 18 months of hard work with my office and Economic Development to seal this deal. Once the contract was signed, Steffen May, their Managing Director said to me:

"You know Drew, we looked at multiple locations across Ontario and in the southern United States to locate this facility. We likely could have negotiated the same financial deal with any of them – but there were 2 things that had us choose Windsor."

I said, what were those things?

He said, “first the fact that you took the time to come to Germany and sell your community – you were the only Mayor to do so.”

And I said, “what’s the second reason?”

He replied, “that when we got here and looked around – everything you said was true. Access to the US was easy, land was as you described it, housing prices were affordable, you had great community amenities, but most of all – the people were as nice as you described.”

And at that moment – I knew all the work we’ve put into our community for the last 15 years. All the heavy-lifting and tough decisions, all the long council meetings, all the encouragement given by you – friends, neighbours, family, colleagues, my fellow Windsorites – it’s all enough to get us to where we’re going.

I know we’ll float if pushed into the sea – but with all of you – supporting all of us – more than float – we’ll swim to the other side.

As we take leave from this stage – I hope tonight, as you’re laying in bed – contemplating the day gone by – you feel the sense of urgency we all should feel. But know that all of us on this stage – have Windsor’s back. All 11 of us will be working tirelessly to get us to where we need to be as a City.

You know, it’s unlikely when he delivered the Gettysburg Address Lincoln could have imagined the profound impact his brief remarks would continue to have on his nation almost 8 score into the future.

Unlike Lincoln, I was not able to say what needed to be said in just 271 words.

He delivered his Gettysburg Address at a time that America needed to heal and rebuild. We, too, continue to heal and grow following a deep recessionary period. We are however still in for a fight. One that requires us to continue to rebuild and redefine our local economy.

We must be agile enough to adapt to the new automotive manufacturing economy while aggressively pursuing new sectors and new industries that will position us as leaders in

You know Abraham Lincoln was right when he said, “The best way to predict your future is to create it.”

And create it together, we shall. To ensure the best of Windsor continues for generations to come.

Thank you all for being here tonight. Enjoy your evening. Bonne soirée.