

MAYOR GORD MILSOM
CITY OF WEST KELOWNA
INAUGURAL SPEECH
NOVEMBER 1, 2022

Good afternoon everyone. Welcome/Way. Thank you for joining us on this very special day – as we celebrate the beginning of the term for the City of West Kelowna’s new Council.

I wish to acknowledge that we are gathered here today on the traditional territory of the syilx/Okanagan peoples. We are very grateful to the syilx people, to our good neighbours Westbank First Nation, for their rich heritage and culture and for their responsible stewardship of these lands since time immemorial.

We were hoping to have Westbank First Nation Elder Grouse Barnes provide an Indigenous blessing today, but unfortunately he is not able to be with us as he is not well. We hope that he is feeling better soon and we look forward to his presence at one of our future meetings.

We were also hoping to have the “Okanagan Song” sung following Elder Barnes’ blessing, but due to the many inaugural meetings

happening at this time, we were not able to make those arrangements.

The “Okanagan Song” serves as the anthem in honour of the sylix/Okanagan Nation and acknowledges the profound responsibility to care for the land. To watch and learn about the “Okanagan Song” please visit the Westbank First Nation website. The link is provided within today’s program.

I wish to thank Don Richmond, our City of West Kelowna Fire Department Chaplain, for providing the inspirational invocation and for leading us in the singing of “O Canada.”

I wish to thank Paul Gipps, our CAO, for conducting today’s swearing in ceremony of our Council-elect. Also, I wish to extend a big thank you to our City staff for all their efforts in organizing this meeting and ceremony so well.

Finally, I wish to thank the other participants in today’s opening procession and our ongoing ceremony – the piper, our RCMP members, and our West Kelowna Fire Rescue Honour Guard. Thank you to you all.

It is my pleasure to recognize and welcome local dignitaries, some of whom have been able to join us today:

- MP Dan Albas
- MLA Ben Stewart
- Westbank First Nation Chief Robert Louie & Council
- Past City of West Kelowna Mayor and Councillor Doug Findlater
- Past City of West Kelowna Councillor Jayson Zilkie
- Greater Westside Board of Trade Chair Amber Hall

I wish now to turn my full attention to and to congratulate the City of West Kelowna's new City Council:

- Councillor Stephen Johnson
- Councillor Rick de Jong
- Councillor Tasha Da Silva
- Councillor Jason Friesen
- Councillor Carol Zanon
- Councillor Garrett Millsap

I congratulate you for either being re-elected or for being elected for the first time.

I also wish to extend my congratulations to your family & friends and to thank them for all the support that they have provided you. Their support will continue to be very much needed and appreciated over the next four years.

At this time, I ask my wife, Laurel, and all of Council's family members whom are with us today to please stand so that we can applaud you all and say "THANK YOU."

Fellow Council Members, we have been elected by our citizens to be leaders of our local government and of our community.

The people of West Kelowna have placed their faith and trust in us, as their leaders, to provide good governance and to ensure that the essential work is being done by our local government.

- We must continue to invest in policing and fire rescue so that our residents are safe & secure
- We must manage our civic infrastructure and public spaces so that the needs of our residents and businesses are met today and in the future.
- We must be fiscally responsible and always prudent with public money
- We must make policy decisions, and consider and pass bylaws

- We must make decisions after careful listening and thought, and we must make decisions based on what's best for our community as a whole.

As leaders, we have many ongoing responsibilities to fulfill and we must do them to the best of our ability.

Leadership is also about vision.

West Kelowna is not a small city anymore. West Kelowna is one of the fastest growing cities within one of the fastest growing regions in British Columbia. With growth comes challenges and opportunities.

It is important that we plan and prepare for West Kelowna's longer-term future and I know that this will be a focus of this Council.

The update of our Official Community Plan, which has been underway during the past several months, and consideration of our next Financial Plan will be instrumental in providing future direction for our city.

Council members will have ample opportunity to contribute their visionary thoughts and ideas to these key planning documents. All public participation to date has been very much appreciated and Council looks forward to hearing more from our residents and other stakeholders. Stay tuned for future public engagement opportunities.

Council will soon meet to discuss goals and objectives for the next four years, resulting in a draft “Strategic Priorities” document. This will be an excellent opportunity for Council members to advocate for those projects or initiatives that they believe will help position West Kelowna for long term success and prosperity.

Together, as a Council, in the weeks ahead I anticipate that we will have good discussions and that our “Strategic Priorities” may include some of these general topics which I know are important to Council:

- Completion of existing projects
- Housing options for all
- Public safety and security
- Continued infrastructure and long overdue facility building
- Truth and reconciliation
- Protection of our environment

- Recreation, arts & culture
- Economic development
- Collaboration locally and regionally
- Advocacy with senior levels of government

Needless to say, I am excited about working with our new Council and as always with our city management team and our staff.

I leave you with two quotes which are favorites of mine:

“Alone, we can do so little; together we can do so much”

- Helen Keller

“Be the change that you wish to see in the world”

- Mahatma Gandhi

To our community, thank you for putting your trust in our Council. We will be working hard on your behalf over the next four years.

West Kelowna is the place to be. Our future is very bright!

Thank you again for your attendance today and thank you to those watching on our livestream.

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