



SPEAKING NOTES
FOR MAYOR RYAN

EVENT: Mayor's Board of Trade Address
TOPIC: Pickering - State of the Union
LOCATION: Carruther's Creek Golf Centre
DATE: February 24, 2009
TIME: 8:30 am

It's been a year since I spoke to you in this forum about the promise and pride of Pickering. And as the year unfolded, a new era of uncertainty and difficulty emerged.

As I look around this room and see so many familiar faces, I see confidence and I sense conviction - which makes me feel certain that – *together* – we will emerge stronger than ever.

Good morning ladies and gentlemen, friends and colleagues.

Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedules to hear about some of the challenges and opportunities facing our community.

Before I begin my address, I'd like to thank the Board of Trade President John G. Smith, Chair Don Terry and Executive Director Kathy McKay for coordinating today's function and their continued efforts in supporting our business community.

We value our partnership with the Board and our common vision of supporting businesses and helping them succeed – a vision that's particularly relevant in these challenging times.

I would also like to acknowledge Pickering Councillors that are here this morning.

Thank you Councillors. I know the Board of Trade appreciates our continued support of its events and initiatives.

As well, I would like to acknowledge our staff, led by our acting CAO, Tom Melymuk, for the outstanding job they are doing in attracting and developing new business opportunities in the City.

I know you will agree that they set the standard for municipal excellence.

The City of Pickering, its Members of Council, and staff are working towards a singular goal - to transform Pickering from a suburban community to a sustainable city.

Over the past few years, many municipalities have learned a painful lesson - that growth in of itself is not sustainable.

Let me be clear. Pickering will see growth, but it will be both healthy and balanced.

We will accomplish this in a unique and revolutionary manner that has the potential to be the blueprint for the next generation of modern and progressive North American cities.

Undergoing such a major transformation is a daunting task even during the best of times. Today's economic climate is so much more intimidating. Many will feel discouraged and hesitant to undertake such bold moves during such uncertainty.

However, we cannot waver. Nor can we stray from the task at hand. There's just too much at stake to sit around and be passive.

Clear and decisive action is what is needed. And I hope after this morning's address, you will agree that Pickering is taking the necessary measures to lead the City and Region to a new era of prosperity.

To those in our business community, I encourage you to face these challenges head on, and recognize them as opportunities to strengthen your foundation and perhaps uncover new business avenues.

Take a look around our community and you will see examples of people rising to the challenge.

I'm particularly proud of the many innovative measures businesses are adopting to remain competitive – they're embracing lean business practices, updating and recreating product lines, retargeting client bases and making substantial investments in their operations.

In spite of the universal turmoil, 2008 was a banner year for our city. In fact, there have been many businesses that have chosen to invest and locate in Pickering!

The construction value of all building permits issued through the end of 2008 totaled \$140.9 million - a 62% increase over the previous year.

Our industrial construction values totaled \$41.9 million. That's nearly double the value of any other municipality in Durham. And combined with our commercial construction values, this figure climbs to \$67.3 million.

I am pleased that Pickering's commercial and industrial growth is outperforming our residential growth. Our industrial growth has been so robust that our total inventory of 9,640,000 square feet is the largest in Durham Region.

Pickering is shaping up to be the economic powerhouse of the Region, and yet, we have not even reached our peak. We still have vast untapped potential. And I think the promise of Pickering and all it represents is spreading far and wide into the larger business community.

In 2008, the City of Pickering welcomed a diverse collection of new businesses from a variety of different sectors.

In total we saw the opening of approximately 20 new businesses from various sectors such as Insurance, Financial, Healthcare, Hospitality, Manufacturing, Retail, Professional Services, Automotive, Marketing and Media.

The City of Pickering is proud to be home to successful companies like RecoverCorp, which has twice made Profit Magazine's list of Fastest Growing Companies.

Last year, it opened a new 1,600-square-foot call centre that will create up to 50 new skilled positions in the city.

Pickering is home to relatively affordable and available land and space when compared to other GTA jurisdictions. And according to Colliers International, the GTA remains a desirable location for American companies looking to expand and relocate.

As such, I am very proud to inform you that Pickering will soon be home to a major North American paint manufacturer that is looking to establish a Canadian base of operations.

The company cited several reasons for choosing Pickering – our skilled labour force, our optimal location for both their US and Canadian distribution network, and what clinched the deal was the fact that Pickering was a very welcoming and supportive host community.

I was very pleased to hear such complimentary and encouraging words from the company's CEO, and I look forward to the initial 50 new jobs it will bring to our community. We will make a formal announcement sometime in the next few months.

Our Economic Development team is out there on an ongoing basis talking to you and your colleagues. In these discussions, employers have told us repeatedly that our local labour force is skilled, loyal and flexible, which allow their respective organizations to respond quickly to opportunities and challenges as they arise.

Our percentage of residents who have pursued some form of post-secondary education is 76% which exceeds the Provincial average.

We also have one of the largest immigrant populations in the Region. 30% of our residents are new Canadians – many of whom are educated and highly skilled.

We need to leverage this untapped resource, as these newcomers bring a wealth of invaluable skills to the table and may open the door to international business opportunities.

The City of Pickering is committed to international marketing and business attraction through partnerships such as the Greater Toronto Marketing Alliance or GTMA.

Over the past few years, Pickering has actively lobbied the GTMA to have a more visible and meaningful presence in Durham Region.

As a result, it held an International Leadership Breakfast Club event in Pickering last spring – the first time this type of event was held outside downtown Toronto.

Next month, the GTMA and the Durham Strategic Energy Alliance are co-hosting another International Leadership Breakfast Club event in Durham that will feature George Smitherman, the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

I encourage all of you to attend this breakfast meeting to hear the Minister's plan on infrastructure and also to be heard on this most important issue.

Congratulations to the GTMA and the DSEA for partnering on this event.

Pickering was the founding member of the Durham Strategic Energy Alliance – an organization dedicated to addressing Canada's rapidly evolving energy needs.

I am very proud that what started out as a concept in Pickering has quickly evolved into one of the industry's most significant and influential stakeholders.

Pickering and its companies represent the nucleus of this emerging powerhouse. In fact, our EN3 cluster of energy, environmental and engineering companies is absolutely world class.

Anchored by Ontario Power Generation, Pickering EN3 companies also include AECL, Veridian, Wardrop Engineering, Black & McDonald, Eco-Tec, Areva, Intellimeter, and Crossby.

You may remember at last year's address, I welcomed an international engineering giant to our community.

Aker Solutions is currently relocating and expanding its process technology company from Toronto to Pickering.

This \$17.7-million investment will feature a new 90,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility featuring 17,000 square feet of office space on a 15-acre property. The spring opening will result in approximately 100 highly-skilled technical jobs for our city.

And just a few weeks ago, Pickering's EN3 cluster was further strengthened when SNC-Lavalin Nuclear Inc. opened its new satellite office at 1053 Brock Road to better serve its clients in Pickering and Durham Region.

In a visit to Pickering last November, Premier Dalton McGuinty announced a \$4.9 million investment to assist in Purdue Pharma's \$32-million expansion.

Purdue currently employs more than 200 people and is Pickering's fourth-largest private-sector company. The expansion will double its research and development capacity, and will ultimately create 53 new and highly-skilled positions in Pickering. The expansion will also create more than 100 jobs for skilled tradespersons during construction, which will break ground later this spring.

I commend the Province of Ontario for making this strategic investment in Pickering. The funding will have a significant and meaningful impact on our local economy.

But, more importantly, it's an investment in the long-term health and well-being of all Ontario residents.

Speaking of long-term health, I would also like to thank the Province for its significant investment in the Rouge Valley Ajax-Pickering Hospital.

I am pleased to inform you that the first phase of this \$94.5 million social infrastructure project is on time and on budget - the highlight of which is the new and much larger Emergency Department that will open in September.

I wish to reinforce the continued need for strong community support – particularly as it relates to recruiting physicians, and attracting specialists and other skilled staff.

Once again, we appreciate the Board of Trade and local businesses efforts in helping to create a positive community environment through lobby efforts and support of hospital fundraising initiatives.

Through the support of you – our valued corporate partners – the Mayor's Charity Golf Classic and the Mayor's Gala have raised nearly \$2 million for the hospital.

Together, we are making a public and unequivocal statement that the hospital is one of our community's most treasured and valuable assets.

In addition to health care, we know that post-secondary education will remain an important driver now and into the future.

With the Region home to both Durham College and the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, our community is well positioned to meet the evolving needs of both our employers and labour force.

For this reason, we must continue to invest in knowledge and training. If we are to be competitive in the world economy, our residents need to have access to the best schools and innovative curriculum.

Equally as important, I think a relevant and leading edge university and college will help attract even more companies to Pickering and the Region. As such, it's so critical that collectively we continue to support these institutions through both fundraising and partnerships.

The City of Pickering is actively engaged with both the UOIT and Durham College in regards to expanding their presence in west Durham and forming strategic partnerships to help stimulate economic activity.

Earlier, I had touched upon the promise of Pickering and its mission to transform itself from a suburban community to a sustainable city.

As you can appreciate, this type of transformation cannot occur overnight. Instead, it requires a great deal of planning, vision and foresight.

Ours was the first municipality in Ontario to establish an Office of Sustainability. A key role of the Office is to oversee and coordinate the City's Sustainable Pickering Program, which has made significant strides.

At last summer's FCM Conference, we were honoured to win the Sustainable Community Award in Planning.

Our groundbreaking *Sustainable City Project* was deemed the best of its kind amongst all Canadian municipalities and recognizes our city as one the country's foremost leaders in sustainability.

We are proud of a growing number of Pickering businesses who have accepted our invitation to join us on our journey. Innovative measures are allowing them to reduce their environmental footprint, engage their employees and save money.

In our downtown, 76 solar thermal panels have been installed on the roof of an 'Options for Homes' condominium to heat the building's water supply. This highly visible project is right in the heart of our downtown core, and will serve as a leadership and ideological example to residents and visitors alike.

Also joining us on our journey is Hubbell Canada – one of North America's largest lighting manufacturers. As part of its commitment to energy conservation, Hubbell has adopted numerous measures that will pave the way for substantial cost savings while reducing its carbon footprint.

The Board of Trade's Eco-Business Program, developed with the support of Durham Sustain Ability, presents an opportunity for you to not only be environmentally responsible, but also to save with smart business practices.

I would like to offer special congratulations to Monarch Kitchens for being the first Pickering company to be certified in this program.

Expansion of the Pickering Recreation Complex, made possible through a Municipal Infrastructure Investment grant will be completed by August of this year.

This \$4.5-million project is ushering in exciting improvements, including an energy-efficient heating and air handling system and a green roof that will reflect our commitment to sustainable building practices within our own corporation as well as in the community.

Pickering offers unique opportunities. The Province, through its Places to Grow legislation has identified our downtown as an urban growth centre, and envisions another 20,000 additional people and jobs in our downtown over the next 20 years.

Creating a downtown rich in opportunity is our most important priority!

At this point, I would like to thank Pickering Town Centre. Under the leadership of the centre manager, Alan Arsenault, Pickering Town Centre continually seeks ways to remain the economic and social focal point of Pickering's emerging downtown core.

This multi-award winning facility is undergoing a \$17 million transformation that will give the mall a dramatic facelift, and also make it a more cohesive part of its urban surroundings.

This will be the first of a series of exciting new projects that will transform the very fabric of our downtown. I look forward to making a significant announcement in the near future.

The Premier's GO Transit infrastructure announcement last week included a \$30 million parking structure for the Pickering GO Station.

I am also very pleased to recognize that the Metrolinx plan includes extending GO Transit service into the future community of Seaton.

I applaud the Province for these significant investments in transit and transportation infrastructure.

In addition to transit, improved transportation infrastructure remains critical.

We were all very pleased to hear recent announcements about the 407's eastward extension. Once again, I ask the Board to help the City of Pickering lobby the province for a quick implementation.

The 407's expansion represents unprecedented opportunity for prestige employment in both Pickering and the rest of Durham Region.

The economic promise – while thrilling – is not without its challenges. Remember, to achieve balance, we must give equal measure to social and environmental considerations as well.

We remain optimistic about the opportunity to develop the Seaton Community in Central Pickering. Seaton will serve as a model of urban sustainability for the province.

In this proposed development, more than half of the lands will remain as open space to protect natural heritage features and systems. Remaining lands will be developed as a compact, energy-efficient and transit-supportive urban community of 70,000 people and 35,000 jobs.

Over the next 15 years, few other municipalities are expected to match Pickering's combined residential and commercial growth.

And yet, when Pickering finally reaches its full potential, the majority of our lands will remain designated as green.

Once major development is completed – including Duffin Heights, Seaton and downtown intensification – 60% of Pickering's lands – or about 35,000 acres – will remain designated as "green space."

That's absolutely extraordinary!

Now, that's what I call balance! And that's what sustainability truly is!

In closing, I'd like to thank each of you once again for attending.

Let us continue to turn challenges into opportunities, to support one another and to remain optimistic about tomorrow.

Your interest in our community speaks well to our future and I thank you for your continued support. As always, my door is open!