

SPEAKING NOTES



MAYOR DAVID RYAN

EVENT: APBOT – Mayors’ Address
TOPIC: Pickering
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TIME: 8:30 am

Good morning, I am pleased to once again share with you my perspective on the City of Pickering, our business community; our shared successes and our challenges. As we leave today, I know that we will continue to share a vision of our future; anchored in reality, committed to realizing our potential.

What can I say about the past year that hasn't already been said? Volumes have been written and infinite words spoken about the economic turmoil that gripped the world.

Understandably, I have no desire to dwell on this.

However, I would be remiss not to acknowledge the diversity and strength of our local business community which has kept us steady and always optimistic even during the bleakest of times.

In fact, when I stood before you a year ago, I saw your confidence and sensed your conviction. I had no doubt that we would pull through the recession.

I publicly said then that we would not just endure - we would prosper.

Thank you. Your efforts have made my words seem prophetic.

While surviving may have seemed an accomplishment in itself, I am so proud that many of you grew and expanded your businesses.

For example Derlea Foods more than tripled its operations – when it expanded from 30,000 square feet to 100,000 square feet.

Also, Howard Marten purchased an adjacent 15,000 square foot building in order to increase its operational capacity.

In terms of new businesses, Council was invited to numerous grand openings last year. There was an extended period of time when it seemed like we were cutting a ribbon every other week.

In fact, we attended over 20 business grand openings in the last year.

Granted, many of these were for small businesses, however, we all know that small and mid-sized businesses are the backbone of our economy.

We at Pickering realize this, and have made a concerted effort to support the entrepreneurs who develop their business in our community. In fact, we have been recognized nationally as one of the top 10 places in Canada to start and grow a business.

We actively support small enterprise, because they are the constant that keeps our economic engine running through the best and worst of times.

On behalf of the City of Pickering and its Members of Council, I thank you for your resilience; your confidence in Pickering; and your continued investment in our community.

At this time, I would like to acknowledge the Councillors in attendance.

I am proud that each and every Member of Council is fully committed to economic development and business attraction. Together, we are working hard for you.

And now, I'd like to make a very special acknowledgement.

I'm sure most of you are already aware, because it's been in the paper and on TV. Our esteemed CAO – Mr. Tom Quinn is retiring after an illustrious 40-year career with Pickering.

Tom, I just wanted to acknowledge you in this public forum. You have been such an important part of Pickering for a very, very long time.

Your leadership and drive has helped shape and define our community as it evolved from a sleepy little town to a bustling young city.

I thank you for all of your lasting contributions and we all wish you and Charley well in your retirement.

Can we all give Tom a round of applause?

I would also like to take this opportunity to introduce Tony Prevedel, who will be taking over the CAO reins on June 1st.

Tony has a wealth of senior management experience both here and abroad. And I personally look forward to working with him as we continue to build our city.

In addition, I'd like to thank the Board of Trade President Jason Cameron, Chair John G. Smith and Executive Director Kathy McKay for organizing today's function and for their continued efforts in supporting our business community.

We value our partnership with the Board and look forward to our continued work with you, your colleagues and members.

2010 will be another challenging year, albeit for different reasons.

As you are all aware, municipal elections are being held later this year – October 25th to be exact.

And if you weren't already aware, yes I am running for re-election.

I have served on Council since 1994 and have been Mayor since 2003. While I am proud of my accomplishments to date, I am still eager to move Pickering forward both as a prestige community, and a preferred business locale.

We already know that Pickering is a wonderful community in which to live, work and play. However, if we are going to attract more prominent businesses and development to our municipality, we need those kinds of projects that are both transformational, inspirational and visionary.

We need something truly exceptional that will draw attention to Pickering, and get people to sit up and take notice of the innovative and progressive work being done here.

As such, I am very proud that last year, we were able to secure a landmark project of such magnitude, that it will literally change our landscape...forever.

As I speak, the tallest construction crane in the east GTA is busily working away on a \$50 million dollar commercial and infrastructure project in the heart of our downtown core.

Rising on the north side of the 401 and Liverpool Road will be a new 132,000 square foot "Class A" – LEED Silver office tower. The owners of the building will be the Ontario Pension Board with 20 Vic Management as the property managers.

Yes, I am proud to say that the office tower concept that I have been alluding to for a few years now, is finally coming to fruition.

I know politicians sometimes make promises and then.....

But often there are factors beyond our control or indeed knowledge that can either frustrate or enhance our intentions and plans.

Our downtown is a promise to which I remain steadfastly committed. We have overcome the frustrations and exploited opportunity to begin our exciting downtown development.

Can you imagine – this \$20 million dollar Class A office tower deal was negotiated in the throes of the recession?

That is virtually unthinkable – yet it happened here in Pickering.

Best of all, this office tower will save 200 valued jobs that were slated to leave the city.

You see, back in 2006, Carl Isenburg, the CEO of MPAC, informed me that MPAC had outgrown its Ontario headquarters and was planning to leave Pickering for new space in Toronto.

Very quickly, I realized that this bad news may in fact have been the golden opportunity that we had been waiting for.

As such, I spoke with Carl at great length about the office tower concept. Once he was convinced that this proposal had merit, we quickly set up a series of meetings with MPAC and 20Vic.

I'm not going to say it was easy, because it wasn't. And I admit there were times during the negotiations when I thought the deal was going to fall through. Thankfully, it didn't.

I would like to express my personal appreciation and that of Council to both 20Vic and MPAC for their confidence in and commitment to our City.

When the agreement was finally signed in May of last year, I was ecstatic. Through sheer will and determination, we were able to save 200 jobs, and commit to the construction of a new Pickering landmark that doubles our downtown office capacity.

During this time, the world economy began its' free fall and the Federal and Provincial Governments began rolling out stimulus funding packages.

Thus began yet another round of intense lobbying, negotiations.

I am proud to say that we were able to get the Provincial and Federal governments to commit to \$30 million dollars in new infrastructure investments.

\$10 million of that will go towards a fully-enclosed pedestrian bridge that will span Highway 401 and connect the Pickering GO Station to the office tower.

The concept of a bridge has been in existence for over a decade. I applaud the Council of the day for first conceiving this idea.

However, I was always adamant that the City would not build a bridge to nowhere. It had to serve a higher purpose than what was originally conceived.

And now, we've accomplished a much greater feat.

The pedestrian bridge represents a new era for Pickering, and will literally be our bridge to the future...a more sustainable future.

And I am most proud that this \$10 million dollar bridge will be built at no cost to Pickering's residential and commercial tax base.

GO Transit will own and operate the bridge. This means that it will also assume all responsibility for its maintenance, upkeep and liability.

While it doesn't receive the lion's share of the infrastructure funds, it is definitely the showpiece of the project.

There is no other structure of its kind anywhere in Ontario. This one-of-a-kind project is not only important to Pickering and Durham Region; it is also a significant endorsement on the part of the senior levels of government.

Namely, we are putting a priority on public transit, we are investing in a more healthy and balanced future. AND we are showcasing it in downtown Pickering.

In fact, the combination of the office tower and the pedestrian bridge will be the most visible examples of sustainability in the whole province.

Together, they will be a landmark structure announcing where Toronto ends and where Pickering and Durham Region begin.

The remaining \$20 million dollars will go towards the construction of a new GO Transit parking deck at the base of the tower to accommodate 500 vehicles.

Imagine 500 fewer cars on the road and getting those commuters onto public transit.

That's over 230,000 less car trips to and from downtown Toronto every year.

I'm not even going to attempt to calculate how much greenhouse gas emissions we will be reducing, but I do know that it is a huge step in the right direction and that it will have tangible benefits for our residents and our environment.

When speaking of the Pickering GO Station, I am compelled to address last week's train derailment.

We were very fortunate that no one was injured; considering that one of the rail cars breached the commuter parking lot and damaged a vehicle.

What troubles me most is that this is not an isolated incident. In fact, we've experienced six train derailments in the past six years right here in Durham.

I fear that the next time may produce catastrophic results.

As such, I requested a meeting with Ministers Baird and Merrifield to communicate our collective concerns.

They have agreed to meet with me next week, so I thank them for giving priority to this most important issue.

Yes, the efficient transportation of goods and products is of great importance, but not at the expense of public safety.

And should a disaster ever occur, our whole downtown district and surrounding business parks would be paralyzed.

Let's do our best to ensure that this doesn't happen.

As you are aware, the Province of Ontario has named Pickering's downtown an urban growth centre – one of only two in Durham Region.

In addition, our downtown and surrounding area has been identified by Metrolinx as an anchor hub.

As such, I am very pleased that the senior levels of government are making the kind of significant infrastructure investments in our downtown that will help make these designations a reality.

Durham Region in cooperation with GO will realign bus service so all DRT buses operating north of the 401 will utilize the new transit hub at the office tower while all GO buses and DRT operating south of the 401 will use the newly renovated GO station.

With the completion of the new “north” parking structure, GO will begin construction of a second “south” parking structure, effectively increasing the total parking capacity for our Pickering station by 1/3 while eliminating the need for the current “overflow” lot to the east.

I would be remiss not to acknowledge our private partners who are also helping to make our downtown such a vibrant and compelling destination.

Earlier, I had mentioned 20Vic Management. Some of you may not be aware that they are also the property managers of Pickering Town Centre.

This regional shopping destination has completed a \$17 million dollar transformation that gave the mall a dramatic facelift, and also made it a more cohesive part of its urban surroundings.

Pickering Town Centre plays an integral role in our city. Not only is it a strong economic driver, it is also a very active and supportive community partner.

This is a reflection of the progressive management philosophy in place led by Allan Arsenault, the Manager of Pickering Town Centre, who has overseen the mall’s evolution from a shopping destination to that of a community gathering place.

In some sense, the Pickering Town Centre is the Heart of the City.

For example, we recently held our Earth Day event there, where hundreds of people stopped by to learn how they can become more sustainable in their everyday lives.

In addition to being a gracious host of community events, it should also be noted that PTC is also an industry leader with respect to employing sustainable practices.

Specifically, last year, the mall achieved the Building Owners and Managers Association Best Level 3 certification for meeting all of its Go Green Best Practices and achieved over 80% of the GO Green Plus Assessment.

In addition, it also won the Recycling Council of Ontario's Facilities Gold in its 2009 Ontario Waste Minimization Awards.

We thank Allan and his team for being active partners in our sustainability journey.

At last year's address, I announced that an American company was setting up its Canadian base of operations in Pickering. At the time, I couldn't reveal the name of the company.

Well, I am proud to say that Ennis Traffic Safety Solutions – a global leader based out of Texas will soon be opening the doors of its new 67,000 square foot complex.

Initially, Ennis was looking at bringing 25 new jobs to Pickering. I'm proud to announce that they will be more than doubling this to 60 new positions as they are now setting up an R&D branch at the new Pickering complex.

I would like to point out that Ennis underwent an exhaustive nationwide search for its new corporate office. What clinched the deal for Pickering was our proactive approach to business development.

Notwithstanding all of Pickering's numerous attributes, John Midea, the president of the company, personally told me that he was impressed with how welcoming, engaging and professional our Economic Development staff was during the selection process.

I wish to congratulate our team for another job well done.

They truly are the ambassadors of our city and help promote Pickering's nascent brand to greater commerce and industry.

As a result of their outstanding efforts, we will soon have another 60 new high-tech manufacturing and research & development jobs in Pickering.

Over the last few years, Pickering has experienced a massive surge of employment.

Since I became mayor, we have seen the creation of approximately 3000 new jobs.

While things slowed down over the past year, we have certainly maintained a healthy pace.

In 2009 alone, we issued \$85 million dollars in construction building permits. Around half of this can be attributed to industrial construction.

In fact, over the past two years, we have seen approximately 580,000 square feet of new commercial/industrial space built in Pickering.

This figure speaks to a vibrant local economy where new businesses are starting up and existing companies are expanding.

In addition to Derlea Foods and Howard Martin, Purdue Pharma will complete its \$32 million dollar expansion later this spring.

This nearly 50,000 square foot project will double Purdue Pharma Canada's research and development capacity; and will ultimately create 53 new and high-skilled positions in Pickering.

Purdue Pharma, represented here today by Randy Steffan , Director of Corporate Affairs, is doing a tremendous job of diversifying our local economy and crystallizing a brand new industry in our city and region.

While Pickering can boast of having a diversified economy, there is no dispute that we are known nationwide as a nuclear municipality. I'm proud of this distinction. And I'm proud that it will continue to describe Pickering for many more years to come.

Of course, I say this in reference to the announced closing of the Pickering nuclear station.

Yes, it will eventually cease its nuclear energy production.

And yet, I stand here before you – cool, calm, collected and confident.

As most of you are aware, I do not engage in the politics of fear.

To take an issue, and instil fear in the community for political gain is beyond immoral and irresponsible. It is inexcusable.

And, as you know, it is bad for business.

Let's look at the facts.

Ontario Power Generation will cease production in approximately 10 years. That's what's been reported.

In fact, OPG will be investing \$300 million dollars in the station to keep it operating in a safe and efficient manner until the end of its production cycle.

What people don't realize is that after the operation ceases, the station will migrate to a significant project phase for safe layup, storage and eventual decommissioning.

The safe layup and storage project is an expansive and exhaustive process that involves highly-skilled workers to complete safe storage and decommissioning activities over many years – if not decades.

I assure you that the Pickering nuclear station will continue to be a busy hub of activity for a very long time.

In fact, it may be 50 to 60 years from now, by the time the station is fully decommissioned and the spent nuclear waste is relocated.

Concurrently, OPG's planned multi-billion dollar refurbishment of Darlington will be one of the key economic drivers for the region over the next 65 years.

Once underway, it may turn out to be the largest construction project in the country with a tremendous cascading effect.

At a recent GTMA event, here in Durham, we heard Minister Duguid reiterate his and Premier McGuinty's commitment to the New Build in Clarington.

With apology to Oliver Twist we say, "Please sir, can we have it now".

While the economic impact will resonate throughout all of Durham's municipalities, I feel Pickering is well positioned to capitalize on much of the anticipated job creation.

Our geographic location remains one of our key competitive advantages. As the gateway city to both Toronto and Durham Region, we will definitely capture a huge share of companies looking to do business in the energy sector while remaining close to the financial centres in Toronto.

In the interim, OPG will continue to be committed to working and building partnerships through corporate citizenship and economic leadership.

It will continue to foster a skilled workforce and energy industry development in Pickering and Durham through investment in post-secondary education and economic development through partnerships with the community, university, college and business and trade organizations.

In all of my discussions with OPG senior management, they have reiterated their ongoing commitment to the City of Pickering and its residents.

While OPG's presence in Pickering will change, it will not disappear.

Rather, I foresee a gradual evolution where the decommissioning of the station spawns a brand new paradigm that would demand a large number of highly skilled and specialized workers, and resulting spin off industries.

Our model for "nuclear decommissioning" would be nurtured and perfected. Then a new Centre of Excellence resident here in Pickering would export this benchmark model to the world.

Once again, instead of defeat, I see opportunity.

And instead of a myopic outlook, I choose to see the broader vision.

While the nuclear industry will continue to be a major part of our business landscape for many more years, there is an immediate opportunity to strengthen and expand our energy portfolio.

As you are aware, 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 and region'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 Veridian, Wardrop Engineering, Black & McDonald, Eco-Tec, Areva, Intellimeter, Crosby Dewar, SNC-Lavalin Nuclear, and Connectrix, just to name a few.

Our EN3 cluster, in combination with our DSEA partnership, makes Pickering a prominent player in the province's energy landscape.

That's why I am hopeful and confident that more and more industry leaders will choose to locate to Pickering in the years to come.

The Province of Ontario has designated 35,000 jobs for the Seaton employment lands. And I foresee that a large portion of these jobs will be energy-related – specifically green energy.

I've had discussions with Brad Duguid, the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure on this very topic.

I am confident that the Ministry will make the correlation between Ontario's green energy investment strategy with the opportunities that Seaton represents.

In fact, Seaton offers an unparalleled opportunity for all businesses. It's projected 70,000 residents represent a huge new market for our local economy.

From an employment perspective, that's a vast pool of talent to bolster our workforce – already one of the most skilled and educated in Ontario.

From the municipality's perspective, we remain optimistic that Seaton will serve as a model of urban sustainability for the GTA and beyond.

70,000 new residents will live in the most sustainable community in the province.

These master planned neighbourhoods will set the proverbial bar for new home development and become the blueprint for municipalities.

Going beyond the actual housing product, the plan ensures that 60% of the land 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.

Over the next 15 years, few other cities or regions 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 Seaton, Duffin Heights, and downtown intensification – 60% of Pickering's lands, or about 35,000 acres, will remain designated as "green space" – both agricultural and natural heritage.

Not too many GTA municipalities can boast this degree of balance and sustainability. Once again, Pickering will lead the way.

Understanding the nature of politics, there are no guarantees that I will be here after the October 25th election.

However, I can guarantee that we are on the cusp of a new era for Pickering – one that's brimming with a wealth of promise, excitement and confidence.

I've spoken to you at great length about the office tower already. Yet, this is merely a prelude to the significant initiatives in store for our downtown and our city.

You all know that MPAC is the anchor tenant for the new office tower. What I didn't tell you is that 20Vic had originally planned for an additional two storeys to meet future demand and was going to build on spec only.

Well, they didn't have to wait too long. That future demand is here right now. I'm excited to inform you that we have filled those final two stories.

While I cannot reveal who the tenant will be, I can say that this will be one of many exciting announcements in the future.

Our downtown is becoming the vibrant destination that we have always envisioned. And I fully expect to make more major business and culture announcements in the not-too-distant future.

Pickering is fast becoming the premier municipality in Durham Region. Our potential has always been latent, and now it is being realized.

I am proud and I am enthusiastic, but I am not content. Our success has just made me more determined.

I have now set my sights higher for Pickering and I ask you to do the same.

This past year, I was spreading the merits of our City and Region on the other side of the world. Last April, I traveled to Saudi Arabia as the guest of the Crown Prince and met with various business leaders to discuss trade and business opportunities.

At home, we hosted networking events for both the Consul Generals of India and the Republic of China to promote our competitive business advantages.

For many of you already involved in international trade, I want to express my thanks, as our collective work is starting to bear fruit.

Slowly, but surely, the eyes of the world are being drawn to Pickering – especially as it relates to the burgeoning sectors of energy and sustainability.

I point with pride to ECO-TEC who has been doing business in China for many years and Intellimeter that is now entering the India electricity market in a significant way.

Two Pickering based companies who are indicative of what we can achieve.

I wish to leverage this emerging global recognition and parlay it into increased economic development for both Pickering and Durham Region.

Pickering was coined the 'Millennium City' back in 2000; the first Canadian City of a new century.

As we conclude our first decade, I say to you that Pickering is the City of the future, and will be one of Canada's foremost municipalities.

However, if we are to become truly great – we must strive for greatness. Half-measures will only produce modest results.

The future is neither for the naysayers nor the timid. I ask you to join with me; dream the big dream; welcome the challenges; stay the course; and celebrate our successes.

Working together, our vision will become our future.

Thank you.