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Inaugural Address

Honoured guests, members of the community, Council & Staff, it is both a privilege and an honour to speak before you this evening.

I would like to begin by congratulating every member of Council on their election victory or acclimation. In recent weeks, I've met with each Member of Council individually and was impressed by the common values and vision that were shared with me.

Team-building, positivity, respectful dialogue and a commitment to include everyone in our way forward this term were some of the values we spoke of. I commend each of my colleagues for setting the bar high with their own personal pledge to these values.

In public service, we're elected to represent everyone: those who voted for us, those who did not vote for us, and those who did not vote at all. With both new and returning faces on Council, tonight's inauguration marks the beginning of a 4-year chapter where we will establish a shared vision, and we will work together to best serve all the people of Mississippi Mills.

As I look out in the audience this evening, I see Heads of Councils spanning decades before me and I think of the words of Isaac Newton:

*If I have seen further than others,
it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants.*

As I stand here before you, I see many giants whose vision, dedication and inspired leadership continue to shape our community.

Mississippi Mills is the community we are today because of your hard work and the hard work of all members of Council who came before. THANK YOU. On behalf of Council, let me say that it is an honour to continue this work, standing on your shoulders.

And now as the baton is passed to us, it is the responsibility of this Council to continue to set out a vision for Mississippi Mills that reflects the community we are today and who we want to be in the years ahead.

In many ways over the next four years, we will be defining a new chapter. Globally, we are entering a new post-pandemic era with high-inflation, supply-chain issues and the war in Ukraine. The effects being felt both around the world and right at home. As growth pressures, climate change and economic opportunity are addressed across the province and across our country, we too will face these challenges and opportunities here at home in Mississippi Mills.

- With a gap of 1.5 million homes across Ontario, communities like ours will feel the pressure of sustained growth. But in that, we have an opportunity. We can choose to plan and shape that growth so that our community includes everyone: The single parent, the new immigrant from Syria or the Ukraine, the senior as they age in place, the entrepreneur bringing local employment.

We can build a place where families grow and then see their own kids and grandkids raise their families here too. We can have vibrant villages, our heritage downtowns, and shape our growth to keep the personality and rural, small-town character of Mississippi Mills shining bright.

- We have the opportunity to do things a little differently than before. As an active farming community, we can look at concepts like cyclic sustainability. What role can the Municipality play in making sure no agricultural product goes to waste, and support sustainable local food production at a time when food sovereignty could never be more important? What ways can we as a Municipality take meaningful action on Climate Change as we build, grow and change?
- We also have an opportunity to turn up the dial on local economic development. While there continues to be challenges related to inflation, work-force availability and costs of materials and goods, here too there is opportunity.

We can build on what we already do so well in Mississippi Mills: agri-tourism, premium food manufacturing, craft-distilling, craft-brewing and farm-gate sales. We have a business park, supported by a provincial grant of over \$1M, built, serviced and ready for new or expanding businesses. We also have the potential for new on-farm opportunities as result of the completed LEAR.

How do we shape our growth? How are we going to support new opportunities? How are we going to get there? And how do we make sure we get it right?

Well, we need to talk to each other, respectfully. And it's important that we listen. Really listen. And I don't just mean talk to the people you know. As members of Council and members of the community, we need to talk and listen to people who think differently than we do ourselves. People who have different experiences.

We are on the eve of our Bicentennial next year in 2023. And I'm encouraging everyone, from all corners of our community to get involved – we have so much to celebrate! The Bicentennial will be a celebration yes, but also a display of our character, our history, and the things that make us really proud.

Of course, I encourage all of you to come out to meetings and information centres, ask questions of your Councillors, get involved and be an informed citizen.

But my challenge to every member of Council, everyone in this room, every Mississippi Millian: during our Bicentennial year get involved, volunteer or attend something you wouldn't normally go to.

Celebrate what makes someone else proud to live here.

- If you've never heard the bands at the Legion, go to one of their music nights;
- if you've never met a local farmer, register for a farm tour;

- if you haven't been involved recognizing the rich Indigenous History of these lands, get involved with the Seven Teachings;
- if you don't get all the fuss about puppets, volunteer at a Puppets Up show!

What better way to get to know someone, who maybe doesn't think like you, than to celebrate and have fun together. Our Bicentennial will provide lots of opportunities!

With the open minds and commitment of my Council colleagues and the wider community, I am eager to get started. Everyone has a role to play to ensure all voices are heard in our community, and that we define our next chapter together ... so that Mississippi Mills will forever be this beautiful, vibrant place we all love and call home.