

Speaking Remarks

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Thanks for the warm welcome!

I am pleased to be in Aurora, and equally pleased to be here today at this important gathering. I see lots of my colleagues here also ... not sure if they're here to listen to me or the Mayor. For my job security (and theirs) I'll assume they are totally here for the Mayor.

I'd like to start by thanking the Chamber of Commerce for giving me the opportunity to introduce myself to the business community. Three months ago, the thought of being here in Aurora was nowhere on the radar for me. Born and raised in Sudbury, I have only spent 6 years out of The North in Ottawa, and that was to get an education and start my first career in technology. Other than those 6 years after high school, until now I have only lived in Sudbury. I must say that in the short 6 weeks I have lived here, I feel very comfortable already, thanks in part to the warm welcomes like I have experienced here today.

I am conscious of the time so I'll be brief with my introduction. It is with some trepidation that I even agreed to speak before the Mayor at his event. Another potentially career limiting action if I handle it wrong. Given that I am still on probation, let me give you a short introduction and then I'll get away from the mic so the real event can commence.

As I finished post-secondary school in the Nation's Capital I was offered a job working for an upstart technology provider in downtown Ottawa. Within a short period of time I was asked to consider a partnership in the new business which I accepted conditional on opening a location in Sudbury within 5 years. A year later we had a small branch in Sudbury and a year after that I bought the branch out as a separate business. Over the next 9 years, I grew the business from three employees in Sudbury to over 60 employees in 4 cities across Northern Ontario. It was a great entrepreneurial ride, one that ended when a publically traded company bought it for what I thought it would be worth 5 years in the future.

In the beginning of that ride, as a new entrepreneur arriving back in Sudbury, I was encouraged to join the local Chamber by my lawyer and business mentor. Aside from buying my membership, my first real interaction with the Chamber of Commerce as a member was actually to complain that they bought computers without giving me a chance to compete. But that started a long and productive partnership that I had with the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce throughout my private and public sector careers. I volunteered at events and sat on the Executive Committee for years before becoming the President in 1998/99. In 1999, one of my last public roles as Chamber President was to

stand before the City Council of the day at budget input sessions and remind them to run the city “like a business”. Of course I wanted low business taxes and less red tape too ... but first and foremost I wanted the city to be run like a business – with Council acting like a Board of Directors.

Ironically, it would be later that same year that I would enter city hall as a consultant, and eventually, in the fall of 2000, end up as first General Manager for Economic Development and Planning in the newly amalgamated City of Greater Sudbury. After spending nine years in city hall, I became CAO. In my presentation to Council, to pitch my candidacy for the role of CAO, I actually referred that same presentation I gave to Council as the President of the Chamber.

The only thing that changed for me after being in city hall was one word. Instead of saying we should run the city like a business, I inserted the word “more” ... we should run city hall more like a business. Through my years working in the municipality I had come to realize that it was actually impossible to run a town or city like a business, but that fact in my opinion seemed to be a license to often abandon all business thinking in government. Instead, I wanted to be the CAO so I could try to run the municipality more like a business. Engaging the front line workers, making common sense business decisions when warranted, managing dollars and

people ... like any business must do to survive. There would be lots of non-business things that we would have to deal with as a government, but that should not be an excuse to abandon any business-like thinking in the organization.

And so ... more than 6 years later, I come to the Town of Aurora with that same thought process. Run the town more like a business. I am excited about the opportunity before me and the mandate I have been given by the Mayor and Council. There is plenty of work to do ... the challenges of growth in the GTA are daunting for municipalities of all sizes. Infrastructure issues, infilling pressures, business development, and assessment growth will keep everyone busy. But I look forward to rolling up my sleeves and working from town hall to do what I can to help the community grow and prosper.

And I look forward to doing that with the Aurora Chamber of Commerce. The Chambers play an important role in the community and I view a good relationship with the Chamber as an essential link in the community. I had the opportunity to meet President Khan a couple of weeks ago and I know that there are many changes coming at the Aurora Chamber. I want the members here to know that I understand the work and relevancy of the Chamber and I will do what I can to support your efforts to

build a strong and vibrant business environment here in Aurora.
My door is open at Town Hall.

Again ... thank you for the opportunity to introduce myself this
afternoon and thank you for the warm welcome to Aurora. I am
very happy to be here!