

**MAYOR'S STATE OF THE MUNICIPALITY ADDRESS 2019**  
**Halifax Convention Centre**  
**November 15, 2019**

[SLIDE] Let me begin by acknowledging that we are gathered today on the unceded and ancestral lands of the Mi'kmaq, the land known as Kjepuktuk. We are committed to building on our relationship in the Spirit of Truth and Reconciliation.

[SLIDE] I want to recognize my Council colleagues, each of whom brings something special to the table. We have one new addition, Lower Sackville Councillor Paul Russell.

Sorry, that's Steve Craig's still there. Okay, that's better.

Many have taken on leadership roles, chairing standing committees and serving as deputy mayor (thank you Councillor Mancini).

[SLIDE] Councillor Mason recently wrapped up a term as President of the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities...

[SLIDE] And Councillor Karsten continues to serve as President of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, successfully bringing municipal issues to Ottawa.

[SLIDE] CAO Jacques Dube and some of his team are here too....

[SLIDE] some even take fashion advice from our CAO...

Our staff make me so proud every day.

[SLIDE] I also want you to meet one of our most recent retirees, Rose Preston. She just left our Finance department at 82 years young!

[SLIDE] Thank you to RBC for sponsoring today's event, and to the Chamber and the Halifax Partnership for co-hosting us.

### **Where we came from**

I intend to look ahead today but first I want to take us back to seven years ago. My first address to you as Mayor was in late 2012 shortly after the election.

Some of you may be old enough to remember that time: Darrell Dexter was our Premier; Stephen Harper was Prime Minister...

[SLIDE] And Barack Obama was in the White House. (Yeah, I know, right?)

[SLIDE] In the Halifax Regional Municipality, our smaller 17-member Council had just taken its oath and was preparing to tackle some serious challenges.

[SLIDE] Our downtown was said to be dying or even dead. There was no building activity to be seen; people had abandoned the downtown; young people had hightailed it for opportunities to our West; and we weren't on the radar for Canadian newcomers.

In the entertainment district, debate was raging about swarming's and drunken fistcuffs, causing some to advocate closing all bars by midnight.

The population was stagnant, with growth second last among major Canadian cities. Regional council was too often mired in big arguments over small issues.

[SLIDE] Our city held little sway with other orders of government, struggling to attract and leverage the kinds of investments that would propel growth and stoke ambition.

Indeed, goals for population and economic growth were non-existent.

The week I was elected, the owner of a well-known downtown restaurant called to tell me he was pulling up stakes and moving to the suburbs.

[SLIDE] The downtown was not what it used to be, he said, and it was time to get out. He wished me luck.

Someone told me that we were a city with good bones, but badly in need of rejuvenation. It was discouraging, to say the least.

Our city needed investment, the downtown needed hope and above all, we needed people. So much has changed since then.

### **A city of progress**

Today, I believe we are more prosperous, ambitious and confident, with a bustling urban centre all around the harbour and more complete communities throughout the region.

[SLIDE] What's more we feel worthy of our own good fortune. We believe in our rightful place among Canada's leading cities, and trust that with hard work our ascendancy will continue.

[SLIDE] Look at what's happening to our population: 2016 was a record year for population growth...until we topped it 2017 and again last year with 8,544 new residents.

Fully 87% of our growth (excluding births) came from outside Nova Scotia, mostly from outside Canada.

Halifax is no longer simply growing at the expense of our neighboring municipalities.

Look closely at the graph - a decade ago, 38 % of our growth was from inside Nova Scotia; last year it was 12.9 %.

[SLIDE] More impressive is the fact that a third of that growth was in the 20-29 year-old age group. As I've said before, population in this bell-weather cohort declined in nine out of 10 years from 2000-2010. We were on a slow march toward a big demographic cliff.

No longer!

Today's Halifax is not only younger, it's more diverse.

[SLIDE] Over the course of the last two years, we have become home to nearly 8,400 immigrants. For context, the highest single-year number previously recorded was under 2,300.

[SLIDE] And this year international enrollments in our post-secondary schools were up 11.3 percent.

When I was first elected, the common refrain at public hearings was: "Where are the people going to come from to fill all these buildings?"

Well, we haven't heard that in a while!

[SLIDE] Building activity continues to be strong, with construction values of nearly \$800 million in 2018 and on track for similar values this year.

[SLIDE] In its just released fall report, the Conference Board of Canada predicts continued robust economic growth for our city. Halifax is expected to post the third fastest GDP growth in 2019 among the largest cities in Canada –a healthy 2.6 percent, the strongest in recent memory.

This GDP growth is forecast to outpace the national average out to 2023. What's more, all industries and sectors tracked by the Conference Board will experience growth over the same period.

[SLIDE] Unemployment is projected to remain low, between 5.2 – 5.6 percent for the coming years. Annual growth in household income of 2.7 – 3.4 percent is expected to outstrip inflation, handing more spending power to residents.

[SLIDE] In no way am I suggesting it's time for this...

[SLIDE] Nor do I think it's time to put our feet up and rest on our accomplishments.

But, it's an impressive list of achievements, a great political swan song if you will...  
...but then again

[SLIDE] ... it might make for a pretty solid campaign platform.

[SLIDE] I think our municipality is doing well to keep its own house in order.

[SLIDE] We continue to reduce our debt, down to \$236 million by end of this fiscal.

Working alongside the province we are cutting the red tape that can ensnare business.

[SLIDE] Never has such an anti-bureaucratic initiative had such a bureaucratic name: The Provincial-Municipal Project for Regulatory Modernization.  
Quite a mouthful.

[SLIDE] But, we're asking ourselves at every turn: Can we achieve our desired ends without introducing burdensome new rules?

To that end, we have committed to considering the impact on business when we do create new bylaws, policies and the like.

[SLIDE] I was thrilled to accept the CFIB's Golden Scissors award

[SLIDE] And, I do mean thrilled...

Halifax businesses are also feeling pretty good.

[SLIDE] The latest Business Confidence survey commissioned by the Halifax Partnership, found 89% of local businesses were “extremely” or “moderately” optimistic. That’s up four percentage points from the record business confidence shown last year.

A full 85 percent expect to increase sales this year while 67 percent expect to hire more staff. For every business that plans to downsize, 10 intend to hire. We’ve never come close to this level of confidence before.

Let me tell you, there is no “culture of defeat” in Halifax.

[SLIDE] We’ve gone from losing our mojo....

[SLIDE] to having some East Coast swagger in our step these days.

### **The spirit of our town**

[SLIDE] When Derek Martin first suggested he could partner with us to reinvent the historic Wanderers Grounds into a pop-up stadium for professional soccer – who could have known we would see game days like this?

...That people of all ages, incomes and cultures would march to the field, a Wanderers’ blue sea of chanting, flag-waving fans.

[SLIDE]...That standing-room-only in the kitchen party section would be the best seat in the house

...That we would lose their voices cheering on an international roster, no matter the outcome.

[SLIDE] Let's not forget the Halifax Mooseheads, and Hurricanes – the best deal in town. They too are bringing sports fans out in this city.

[SLIDE] I can't wait for the Halifax Thunderbirds to hit the Scotiabank Centre (By the way the first home game is against NYC on Dec. 7.....is that the big leagues or what?)

When we show up for the home team, we show up for Halifax. These are our teams, our players, our city.

But I also know we have room in our sports-loving hearts for athletes from all over.

[SLIDE] We are so happy to host the North American Indigenous Games in 2020 – the largest multi-sport event EVER to come to Atlantic Canada.

[SLIDE] Thousands of young Indigenous athletes, their coaches and their families experiencing this city and sharing their cultural traditions in the land of the Mi'kmaw.

[SLIDE] Hosting events like NAIG and the phenomenally successful Memorial Cup offer Halifax the opportunity to shine, to demonstrate our welcoming nature, world class cuisine and entertainment scene that sets us apart.

[SLIDE] It's what makes us a winning cruise destination, a favourite conference location, and what's driving year over year record tourism numbers.

### **Moving people and goods**

[SLIDE] Whether visitors or locals, when we give people the opportunity to gather, they do.

[SLIDE] We are learning the lesson that our streets belong to people first. When we close them to cars, we open them to people.

[SLIDE] When we make it easier for people to walk, cycle, or hop a bus they choose to do so.

[SLIDE] Through our new plan for transit, we are building a more efficient, logical system, rather than perpetuating routes that were driven by politics not traffic engineering.

[SLIDE] Halifax Transit's efforts to rethink its routes and invest in the quality of its service is paying off. Last year we saw a 4.8 percent increase in ridership, and over the first half of this year ridership is up an additional 8.8 percent.

[SLIDE] An efficient, high functioning public transit system and active transportation network is vital to our livability and sustainability goals. Indeed, our Integrated Mobility Plan will move more people to these greener, healthier travel modes.

[SLIDE] No doubt you've seen the new separated bike lane on South Park Street or the Barrington Street multi-use greenway.

[SLIDE] The All Ages and Abilities Bike Network received a big shot in the arm with a \$25 million combined investment by our three orders of government.

I know some people are skeptical about cycling infrastructure, but it's not about who is on a bike today so much as it is about who could be on a bike in five years, and we are not turning back.

[SLIDE] Expect to see work begin on our plan to complete 30-kilometres of bicycle and pedestrian pathways, including the long-awaited fix to cycling access on both sides of the Macdonald Bridge.

[SLIDE] As our city grows and development intensifies, we must also consider how we move goods.

The significance of investments in the future of the Port of Halifax can not be understated.

[SLIDE] On a cool, wet June day, I joined with federal Transportation Minister Marc Garneau, MP Andy Fillmore and Minister Labi Kasoulous to share news of transformative investments from the National Trade Corridors fund.

[SLIDE] These monies will be used to support growing Port operations, cargo links by road and rail, and to redesign the Windsor Street Exchange by the Ceres terminal.

[SLIDE] Investments by government, the Port and CN will bring the total project value to almost \$100 million. The municipal share: only 13.5 million.

[SLIDE] Navigating government relations can be a bit like turning the Queen Mary, but this time things came together with the speed of a ferry crossing thanks to a shared desire, strong partnership and hard work.

[SLIDE] These investments should take close to 75 percent of cargo truck traffic off our busy downtown streets. This has been a goal of mine, and ours, for years.

I want to recognize outgoing Port CEO Karen Oldfield and former board Chair Hector Jacques for their relentless pursuit of port business, partnerships and funding to ensure the Port's place in the future of Halifax.

[SLIDE] Soon we will be making a big move of our own, issuing a tender for the demolition of downtown's infamous "road to nowhere".

The outdated Cogswell Interchange will be replaced by more human scale streets, cycling and transit lanes, green space and private development.

Indeed, we will create a downtown precinct that makes a new statement about our beautifully old port city.

[SLIDE] It is my hope that it reflects a city with a renewed sense of adventure, a city that sparks curiosity, rewards creativity and inspires innovation.

[SLIDE] Perhaps nothing personifies this new spirit of place more than our emerging Innovation District.

### **A growing tech hub**

Informed by our coastal location this district is creating one of the most concentrated talent pipelines in the country: Universities, researchers, start-ups, scaleups, and hubs coming together.

[SLIDE] In Dartmouth, COVE is filling up with applied research companies intent upon revolutionizing the ocean tech sector. COVE marked its one-year anniversary last month with the addition of its 58<sup>th</sup> resident company. That's more than one per week.

[SLIDE] On Oct. 29, COVE CEO Jim Hanlon was in Seattle to receive an international award recognizing COVE's outstanding contribution to the advancement of marine science and technology.

[SLIDE] In the Maritime Centre, **Volta** has evolved from a cramped headquarters to the largest Canadian innovation space outside the Toronto/KW corridor with its 60,000-square foot expansion.

[SLIDE] I am so excited to say that last week we opened our Halifax civic innovation outpost there...

[SLIDE] a space to enable collaboration, unleash fresh ideas, technologies and partnerships.

[SLIDE] When I sat down with the lab head, who I first met when he was doing similar work for the Digital Kitchener, we discussed creating more living lab

opportunities for early stage companies, using innovation to tackle complex social problems and improve City Hall transparency.

[SLIDE] You see, every city worth its salt is pursuing tech companies and cultivating the start-up community.

After years of explosive growth in San Francisco, Boston, Toronto and other heavy-hitting cities, a new phenomenon is upon us. The rise of the mid-sized city - ripe for growth, more affordable and more livable than their outsize counterparts.

[SLIDE ] Some of you were also at the CBRE breakfast this week where Jeff Larsen talked about the Halifax innovation scene, noting that we are exactly the kind of city talent seeks out.

In fact, Halifax is rising through the ranks, now 36<sup>th</sup> on a top 50 list of global cities for venture capital deals per capita. We had the second highest number of venture deals in Canada, according to the 2018 Startup North report.

[SLIDE] Now home to 199 start-ups in a diversity of fields from IT to Life Sciences, Manufacturing and CleanTech, Halifax is the modern midsize city posterchild.

Last year, those start-ups accounted for more than 2,100 jobs with revenue growth of 63 percent, according to Entrevestor.

[SLIDE] It matters for so many reasons, and one in particular. No doubt some of these bright thinkers will help us address the challenge of our lifetime: climate change.

### **The challenge of our generation**

[SLIDE] We will need to harness all the brainpower we can if we are to respond and adapt to a climate that will become increasingly unpredictable and hostile.

[SLIDE] Have a look at this, taken from the top floor of City Hall – the largest march any of us can recall. Most of them are young people moved to action and no doubt driven by something greater: fear.

[SLIDE] Fear they will not live a normal life as we know it, fear they will suffer through calamities we have yet to contemplate. This is not an irrational fear: it's supported by science.

I am proud that we were the second city in the country, after Vancouver, to declare a climate emergency.

[SLIDE] Staff across our departments are finalizing HalifACT2050, our first long-term community-wide climate action plan.

[SLIDE] It seeks to make us carbon neutral by 2050 and, perhaps as importantly, strengthen the resiliency of our communities.

[SLIDE] Electrifying our fleet, retrofitting buildings, developing district energy, improving transit, protecting vast tracts of wilderness...

[SLIDE] and extending the reach of our successful Solar City program – we must do it all and more.

Ultimately, the success of our plan will hinge on the supportive action of our shared community. All of you, all of us.

[SLIDE] Together, we must answer the challenge of a younger generation: What kind of world, what kind of city, will we leave them?

### **Inclusive growth**

[SLIDE] In this current political tide of populism, isolationism and fear, we do well to remember that the moral test for any society is how it treats its members with the greatest need.

[SLIDE] While we grow - which is good - we must ask ourselves: Are we a city for children, the elderly, the disadvantaged and the disabled?

[SLIDE] Are we a city that truly embraces diversity?

This job affords me the opportunity to meet many people who have done very well for themselves, generous people, large employers, big investors, good people.

[SLIDE] But, as importantly, I meet those who struggle.

When I consider today's challenges, they are not the challenges of 2012. We are doing exceptionally well by almost any measure, but the benefits of prosperity do not accrue equally or equitably.

Indeed, it is fair to say that growth often widens the gap between those who do well, and those who don't. Housing affordability, food insecurity, and social isolation demand our urgent, broad and compassionate attention.

[SLIDE] The Poverty Solutions working group, which I co-chaired with Sara Napier, has developed 129 ideas for action.

Some are clearly within our municipal wheelhouse and others require help from government and community partners. But we are beginning to demonstrate what's possible.

[SLIDE] The municipality's Affordable Access Program took effect this year, offering residents in need deeply discounted or free access to municipal recreation programs and options to defer property tax.

[SLIDE] Low income transit passes, offered in partnership with the Department of Community Services, mean nearly 10,000 people are now eligible for free transit.

[SLIDE] The Mobile Food Market – a wonderful collaboration of my office, city staff, the Ecology Action Centre, Nova Scotia Health Authority, MetroWorks and Loblaws – has expanded to bring fresh produce to 13 locations. And community projects such as the amazing Dartmouth North Food Centre are blazing new trails.

[SLIDE] We found a new home for the remarkable Common Roots community farm. Garden plots are taking root on an underused city green space in the West End, many of them tended by Canadian newcomers.

[SLIDE] Jessie Jollymore and the kids at Hope Blooms continue to inspire us. In September, the little social-enterprise-that-could broke ground on its new kitchen and community space.

[SLIDE] We provided the land, Invest Nova Scotia loaned the money, the Building Trades and the corporate sector helped out. We know that the tireless efforts of Jessie and the kids will ensure Hope Blooms continues to sow seeds of possibility.

[SLIDE] These tangible examples of human capacity and generosity of spirit fill me with hope. They show us what we can achieve together, between orders of government, across the private and public divide, and with the impassioned social sector.

[SLIDE] Like so many cities, Halifax is increasingly challenged to address housing affordability.

From shelter for the hardest-to-house, to social housing and affordable options for lower wage earners, the elderly, disabled and single parent families, we must meet a growing need in the face of rising real estate prices, high rents and low vacancy rates.

[SLIDE] The entire spectrum of housing must be a priority if we are to be a city that does not leave many of its own citizens behind.

My office and city staff helped establish the Housing and Homelessness Partnership – a broad group of public, private and NGOs partners determined to end homelessness and housing poverty in Halifax.

[SLIDE] In September, Regional Council approved the Centre Plan Package A, which identified areas for intensification of development. This will allow us to bring on the right kind of housing more quickly, in the right areas - and tackle low vacancy rates.

### **Building on our success**

[SLIDE] As far as we've come, we continue to face the daily demands and broader challenges of any city: environment, human rights, public safety, transit, traffic.

[SLIDE] So, no, we have not reached "mission accomplished", but we're committed to building on the progress we've made.

For many of us our judgement of this place comes down to something more personal, the life we make with the people we love.

[SLIDE] My two children and their friends used to talk in high school about where they wanted to live, the exciting cities of Canada and the world.

[SLIDE] My daughter Emma, with me today, is 23. She graduated from X and is working for RBC here in Halifax. My son Conor, 20, is studying at Memorial and he now talks about returning to launch his career in Halifax.

[SLIDE] for all the statistics, studies and charts, that tell our city's successes, nothing makes me more proud than being the Mayor of a city where my kids want to live.

[SLIDE] Indeed, I want everyone to find their place in today's Halifax. When we look to the future of this place, let's consider the potential of all residents to make a life that holds personal meaning and value.

[SLIDE] The work of building a truly great city is never done, the journey continues.

I have never been more excited about where we it will take us.  
Thank you.