



CITY OF MISSION

MAYOR PAUL HORN - INAUGURAL ADDRESS

CLARKE THEATRE, HERITAGE PARK CENTRE

NOVEMBER 2, 2022

Today we are grateful to be gathered on the shared and ancestral territories of the Sto:lo people. But what does that mean?

It means we are gathered on the shores of British Columbia's longest river. The river we now call the Fraser was known and treasured by the local people as the Sto:lo for 10,000 years before any of our European ancestors arrived here. It fed and moved people from the beginning, and so their name became synonymous with the river itself.

The Sto:lo drains an area of 220,000 square kilometres and carries 20 million tons of sediment into the lower basin every year. People think it's dirty, but the reality is that the Fraser brings greatness in every current. It has created the fertile farmlands all around us and, believe it or not, a skilled panner will still find flakes of gold in every shovelful of sand collected along the shores from Hope to Richmond. Sometimes we forget that those fertile waters have fed fish and plants and other life for eons, and, in so doing, that the river has fed us.

It is incredibly powerful. It gathers waters from streams and other rivers along its 1375 km length and pumps out about 3500 cu metres every second. It could fill our Leisure Centre pool 45 million times every year.

The Sto:lo is the very core of why people first gathered here, and it remains the reason we live here still. It deserves to be listened to, learned from, philosophized about.

The river teaches us that we are more powerful when we come together from distant places and gather our strength as one. It teaches us that we all bring things with us when we arrive, and that while they may seem humble at first glance, there are riches within each of us. It teaches us that we can do incredible things together, bringing food, power, industry, art, invention, and humanity to our communities. It teaches us that time and collective will makes light work of jagged edges, sharp boulders, and other seemingly immovable obstacles. It teaches us that we may ebb and flow and sometimes lose our path, but our nature is to return to a place where we can do good things.

These are difficult times. In my 56 years, I don't recall a time when there were so many reasons to feel stressed. I could sit here tonight and enumerate the obstacles that stand before us, but you already know them all too well. My job is to remind you that we are stronger than those obstacles, provided we are all together.

Like you, I sometimes wonder if fear will be the driving force of this generation. Fear, in all its forms, is our enemy and we cannot let it possess us. If we are possessed by anxiety, we will stand still in a time that demands action. If we are made angry by our fear, we will turn against our neighbours at a time when we most need them. We will forsake and step upon those who stumble along the way. If we stop thinking, learning, and listening because our minds are taken over by a distrust of leaders, scientists, and democracy, we will be forsaking all the riches that have been given to us. We will tackle our biggest tests without direction and without tools.

These challenges are all around us, but we are at a particular crossroads here in Mission. As people come to our community in ever-growing numbers, we must decide how we will greet them and how we will maintain the community we have all come to love.

The vital work that we have begun in the last four years will need to develop further.

One of our priorities must continue to be community visioning, planning and engagement.

Our visioning process will allow us to define what we mean by the community of Mission. It will inform future generations, both those that choose to stay and those who wish to come here sometime in the future.

Our Neighbourhood Approach, a new policy and process that requires developers to work closely with community members long before they bring in an application, will need to continue and improve.

That approach will help us undertake a review of our Official Community Plan, one that looks at our established urban neighbourhoods, which are receiving more and more interest from multi-family developers. It will mean looking at a healthcare corridor near our existing hospital, and considering the future uses of properties along the Lougheed Highway. It will mean working with North Mission residents to help define their future as a rural community, in much the same way as neighbourhood planning was used to define an urban future in our Waterfront and Silverdale neighbourhoods.

A second priority will be boosting our economy and employment.

For too long, we have lost our neighbours every day to commuting. As inflationary pressures hit us all, especially in the gas tank, affordability will depend on the opportunity to work close to home. Employers want us to help generate more local opportunities, first by designating appropriate lands for employment use, and second by expediting the development process.

Employers also want us to work closely with post-secondary educators so that a wider supply of work-ready people is found in our community, so we will be working alongside UFV, Mission Public Schools and other partners to make more opportunities for post-secondary education possible right here in Mission.

For many of us, the change will not be easy. We are so accustomed to being a “bedroom community” that we have grown averse to trucks, industrial buildings, and workplace activity. We have, to a large extent, forgotten our blue-collar roots.

Maybe it’s because I worked for so long at a trades college, but when I see a local truck or a person with a toolbox, I see people who will be home early, raising their children and volunteering in their extra time. I see them spending dollars locally, keeping our own economy strong. I see industrial and commercial developments paying a tax rate 2 ½ times greater than those of residential properties, meaning a lower tax burden for homeowners like me and you and more community amenities we can enjoy together.

Yes, the Waterfront and Silverdale plans will both move forward. These plans are your plans, built from a record amount of community input. The Waterfront Revitalization Master Plan will focus on creating jobs and destination uses that will make us proud once again of the southern gateway to our City. The Silverdale Central Neighbourhood Plan will create new neighbourhoods that will set the standard for walkability and environmental protection.

You have my commitment that both plans will move forward with three critical predicates. First, your voices and those of the landowners will always be actively sought and valued as we progress. Second, the rights of landowners will never be compromised. Third, community resources will always be used with care and transparency.

A third priority is ensuring we are ready for growth.

This will mean many things, but first amongst them is ensuring that our public safety services keep up with our growing population numbers. We need both a fourth fire station and a new RCMP building. We need more firefighters and more RCMP members.

We need to consider our city facilities and amenities, including civic space for staff, arts, culture, sport, and heritage. We must also consider our park needs. As we grow, we will need new parks. And as neighbourhoods densify, people will expect better amenities within our existing parks, with things such as more off leash dog areas, covered facilities, bathrooms, and outdoor theatre space.

If you are like me, as you hear this laundry list of wishes, you start to worry about the cost. It’s clear to me that we cannot afford all things at the same time, so there are two important steps that we must take. First, we must consider a long-term capital plan, one that phases in the addition of new civic amenities overtime, prioritized based on public safety and community input.

The second is that we must define policies that allow us to work with developers so that we can benefit from their contributions. In communities such as Richmond, Vancouver, Port Moody and Coquitlam, major public projects have been paid for by developers in exchange for zoning and density bonuses. I believe we too can provide these options, while still maintaining our community’s character. I believe we are underestimating our value and missing opportunities.

And there will be an immense amount of effort put into effective, regional advocacy. From the compilation of data to a coordinated and strategic approach, Mission can and should facilitate the building of a team of North Fraser communities and organizations that can work as one to address key needs in the areas of housing, highways, healthcare, and schools.

We began by talking about the river, and so it seems fitting that we should identify the environment as our fourth priority.

For the first time in 13 years, we have an up-to-date Environmental Charter, and we will begin the process of implementing it soon. One of the very first steps will be the creation of an Environmental Charter action committee, one which will invite you to play an active role in implementing each of the 70 recommendations it contains.

We will also have work to do during this term when it comes to planning for our solid waste collection and recycling programs. I believe we can do better, making it easier and more convenient for people to divert their waste and preserve our beautiful spaces.

And I believe we owe it to the next generation to plan the future of our Municipal Forest, our landfill, and our share of the Hatzic watershed.

Like the mighty Fraser, the work we must do represents a coming together of many streams. It means working with you, both as individuals and in partnership with your smaller communities. We need to meet you in local groups, such as the Dunsmuir Neighbourhood Association, and the Steelhead and Stave Gardens Community Associations. We need to work with you in federations such as the Mission Arts Council, the Downtown Business Association, and the Mission Regional Chamber of Commerce. We need you in faith groups, sports teams, clubs, and non-profits. From the Mission Environmental Stewardship Society to the Fraser Valley Youth Society, from the Mission Sports Council to the Mission District Historical Society, we just cannot move this City forward without you.

We will continue to need the help of other branches of government, including our MLAs, MP, and Board of Education, but we must widen our reach further. For example, just as we have found success in aligning with Abbotsford, we should look to work with the Councils of Maple Ridge, Kent, and Chilliwack. We need to work on a government-to-government level with First Nations governments with whom we share territory. Not only must we advance the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, but we must also explore cooperative economic development and housing opportunities. We will work even more closely with FVRD, through Electoral Area Directors Davidson, Cassel and Waardenburg, and also with the leadership of the Fraser Health Authority.

If you're not from Mission, our way of being can be surprising. We appreciate plain talk and honesty, but we become romantic poets when we talk about our home. We hope others will leave us alone when we're doing no harm, but also to come to our aid when we are in need. We pride ourselves on being innovative individuals, but we are excited to share our work in teams. And, while we can sometimes let little things become sources of controversy, we believe first in being together.

Maybe it's because we live in the presence of such an enormous force as the Fraser River, but we have always known that we can only succeed if we paddle together. Over the next four years, there will be voices that try to divide us. There will be challenges that make us question who we are and who we want to be. There will be times when we may be tempted to turn against ourselves, but for us – this Council - the work will always be the same. Mission is a community of neighbours, and we must always keep your names in our hearts and minds as we push forward.

Now more than ever, politics and division must be set aside. It's love and peace we need, and we must carry these with the same strength as the river that flows beside us every day.

Onward.