

Mayor Sam Sullivan

Inauguration Address

December 5, 2005

Good Afternoon Judge Ball, Archbishop Ingham, Councillors, Members of the Civil Service, and honoured guests. Welcome.

French Greeting

Cantonese Greeting

Punjabi Greeting

I am honoured to sit before you today as your new Mayor and to set out the framework that will help us to answer the question: When the world arrives in Vancouver in 2010, what kind of city will they find?

Over the next three years, I will ask our council to focus on 2010 with a 2020 vision. To look at the Games as an opportunity to help make our city a better place to live.

I would first like to welcome back to this chamber returning councillors and welcome the new councillors. A wise man once observed: "After election comes omniscience." Let us approach our mandate with a different attitude. In these chambers we will be participants in ancient and noble traditions that have evolved over centuries. Let us continue with humility and respect to honour and further these traditions on behalf of all the citizens.

The citizens sent a clear message on election night that they want our park board, school board and council to work together with other levels of government to make Vancouver an even better city. They do not want to see us bogged down in partisan and ideological debates.

It is for this reason that my first recommendation is to appoint every Councillor, including those who are not part of my caucus, to formal positions within city government. I have done so because of my firm belief that shutting out some Councillors from participation will not help improve democracy at city hall nor cultivate leadership for our future. I anticipate that the Councillors who have agreed to take on these roles will use this special opportunity to work constructively in Council and throughout the region.

I intend to ask Council to formally clarify the roles, relationships and responsibilities of Council, staff and citizens so we are all clear about how we can best serve our city. We will undertake this Triple R Review (roles, relationships and responsibilities) to ensure the resources of our city are properly focused on helping us to achieve the goals I am outlining today, and it will enable us to set the direction for the important decisions leading up to 2010 and beyond.

As part of this review, I would like Council to determine how best to get input from citizens. The contribution of community voices to Council is a vital part of being informed and responsive. We have many dedicated citizens who contribute to our city on advisory committees. We owe them the respect

of Council by enabling their advice to be heard through the most effective mechanisms of involvement.

At the end of every Council term all committees except those mandated by law end, until they are re-constituted by the new Council. I am recommending that Council delay the re-establishment of our committees pending the clarification of roles as part of the Triple R Review (roles, relationships and responsibilities).

Most importantly, the re-establishment of citizen advisory processes should await clarification of the strategic directions this Council wants to take for the city. I will ask Council early in this term, concurrently with the review of roles, responsibilities and relationships, to engage in a process to determine strategic directions and objectives. I would like the framework and the priorities I am outlining today to form the basis of that discussion.

I propose that we as a Council focus on the following question: When the world arrives in 2010, what kind of city do we want them to find?

In every city's history there are moments that shape its destiny. In 2010, Vancouver will be hosting the world. I want this Council to see the Games not just as a few weeks of sport for the world's greatest athletes but as a powerful catalyst that can help us attract resources and focus our efforts on making our city better in every way.

When the world arrives in 2010 I want them to find a city committed to the principle of sustainability. Besides the significant infrastructure legacies the Games will leave behind for the citizens of Vancouver, we should strive to ensure that we remain a leader in the development of sustainable social and environmental legacies leading up to and beyond 2010. But we must also ensure that Vancouver remains a model of economic sustainability, by balancing the many demands for service and infrastructure, with the ability of our taxpayers to pay.

The actions of this Council need to demonstrate to the world that we are open for business and are seeking new investment leading up to and beyond 2010. By reviewing what other Olympic cities did to attract new enterprise, Vancouver has a wonderful opportunity to emulate their success. By seeking to further enhance our relationships with future Olympic host cities such as Beijing and London, we also stand poised to benefit both socially and economically.

I am concerned that the layering on of a number of expenditures in the last few years have resulted in Vancouver taxpayers facing a significant tax increase next year. Over the next three months, we will need to review our spending priorities in an effort to limit tax increases without compromising services.

We must also restore the principle of sustainability to the property endowment fund so that it provides benefits to both current and future generations. We must ensure that our civic infrastructure is systematically maintained so that infrastructure deficits do not get passed on to future taxpayers.

Businesses throughout our city are at risk due to the fact that they pay six times the tax rate of home owners, the highest in Canada. Therefore, I will recommend Council commit to achieving balance through a tax shift in order to help keep businesses throughout the city competitive. As the economic hub of this region, Vancouver must take a leadership role in bringing forward initiatives that will take a long-term approach to economic development. In particular, I believe Vancouver must play a significant role in helping to develop more cohesive regional strategies that will lead to long-term economic growth in the GVRD as whole.

We should speak where possible with one voice in our commitment to an improved liveable region strategy and a stronger regional economy. We must also insist that major infrastructure investment is matched by a commitment to responsible land use planning.

As we begin the countdown to the Cultural Olympiad, a renewed emphasis on supporting the arts and our artists is essential if we are to showcase Vancouver as a dynamic and creative city. In partnership with funding agencies such as 2010 Legacies Now, we will seek out new opportunities to put our artists on the international stage.

In an effort to support the arts, I will also be seeking to establish a new Vancouver Arts Partnership Agreement with the federal and provincial governments which will allow for significantly larger investments in arts infrastructure throughout the City of Vancouver. When the world arrives in 2010 I want them to find renewed arts facilities to showcase our talent.

I am committed to ensuring that the redevelopment of Woodward's moves forward and becomes a real catalyst for helping to make the Downtown Eastside a clean, liveable and safe neighbourhood once again. I would also like to see a revitalized Chinatown with more residents and prosperous businesses when the world visits in 2010.

This Council should also make every effort to facilitate the extremely tight schedule to develop Southeast False Creek, one of our best examples of a truly sustainable neighbourhood. It is important that we capitalize on the \$30 million dollars already committed by senior levels of government for social housing, and that we deliver on our 2010 commitment.

Vancouver has led the world in changing attitudes toward the problem of drug addiction. We have come to see this as more of a health issue than a moral issue, and have pioneered new approaches that deal with the problem in a humane way. I think we need to go one step further. Is drug addiction a sickness? A short term problem you fix? Or does it more resemble a disability -- a long term problem you manage. I believe it is the latter, and we should develop new strategies to reduce harm to people with addictions and to the community. We must be more aggressive in developing strategies for management rather than leaving this problem in the hands of organized crime. This new approach will help significantly reduce the survival street prostitution, aggressive panhandling and open drug market that afflicts our city.

We must ensure we renew our commitment to inclusivity and also address the problem of homelessness in our city. Too many of our citizens are homeless or living in substandard housing. We need to work cooperatively with other levels of government to reduce homelessness by ensuring we have funding for social housing as well as look at innovative ways to increase the number of units built. In the last three years alone, homelessness has doubled. We must reverse this trend.

In an effort to ensure that every citizen has access to clean, safe and affordable living space, it is my intention to have Council examine both public and private options for providing low cost housing. Many of the SROs currently occupied by many of Vancouver's most impoverished citizens are unsafe and we need to commit to finding alternatives.

When the world comes in 2010, I want to make sure they will not find a city that relies on gambling to pay for services to its citizens. It is therefore my intention to seek Council's support to restore a policy to limit the expansion of gambling within the city of Vancouver.

Vancouver's distinction of having one of Canada's highest property crime rates is not acceptable. This must change.

As the Chair of the Police Board, I will challenge our police department, as I do other city departments, to find innovative ways to get more value for money. By doing so, our goal is to get

more of our police on the street in order that they can be fighting crime, not red tape. We must also look at ways to better engage communities in the fight against crime.

I will also recommend that Council support streamlining the enforcement of city bylaws so that we can improve the civility, order and cleanliness of our streets and neighbourhoods.

In order to ensure that citizens can access the services and obtain the information they need from City Hall, I will ask staff to implement a single telephone contact point for City Hall. A 311 number will significantly improve the way citizens access City Hall and ensure that we provide better and faster service, and adapt more quickly to respond to community needs.

I will recommend Council cancel the previous administration's decision to increase gridlock by closing two lanes on the Burrard Street Bridge. Rather, we will move to fast-track the introduction of new cycling lanes that will help to facilitate cyclists and pedestrians crossing False Creek.

Our Council will also increase the number of bicycle paths, greenways and seawalls by 2010 in order to maintain our reputation as one of the most pedestrian and bicycle friendly cities in North America.

Last year Vancouver became the first municipality in British Columbia to accept the challenge of increasing our physical activity by 20% by 2010. We must take this policy and turn it into action by ensuring more people are active every day.

I understand the importance of creating an accessible city. I would not be speaking to you today as Mayor if it were not for the significant progress we have made over the past 30 years to provide access to people with disabilities.

Ultimately, we need to be more than just accessible, we need to embrace a culture of inclusivity in which the contributions of everyone of our citizens is welcomed.

I intend to use my role as Mayor to continue improving accessibility and inclusivity, not only in the city that will host the Paralympics, but throughout Canada.

The rising cost of transit in recent years is of great concern to students, youth, seniors and working people throughout the city. Although we currently form only 25% of the TransLink board, I will request that our three TransLink representatives champion options that will allow TransLink to increase bus service and reduce fares back to more affordable levels.

I will further encourage them to determine the feasibility of expanding the successful U-pass program to students attending Vancouver based colleges. This, combined with more new buses on Vancouver's roads, will help to ensure we do our part to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

I also believe we must acknowledge and support successful partnership models such as those demonstrated through the development of the Canada Line. This project is yet another commitment by Vancouver to help better connect the GVRD and keep our citizens moving throughout the region.

We have serious local and global environmental problems, and many of these are related to suburban sprawl. The resistance to higher densities in the city contributes to sprawl and the escalating cost of housing. Vancouver has made modest but important efforts through the City Plan visioning process to increase densities. I believe we need to do more. I will be asking Council to take a leadership role by setting more ambitious targets. One of the benefits of increased density is to support our ageing population who want to continue living in our distinct neighbourhoods.

What helps to make so many people fall in love with our great city is the beauty that surrounds us. I will ask Council to introduce initiatives that will further beautify Vancouver by 2010. We should consider a matching grants program that would encourage citizens to initiate their own ideas.

Our Council will also place a renewed focus on initiatives that will help to keep our streets, public spaces and alley ways clean of garbage. The efforts of Council and our staff must be equally matched by a campaign encouraging individuals to accept personal responsibility for the general cleanliness of our city.

We will also look at opportunities to establish a green box pilot project to recycle organic waste into compost to reduce the amount of waste that we generate in this city.

I would like Council to contribute to a stimulating intellectual environment and approach problems and opportunities differently by hosting some of the world's great thinkers and doers. Going into this new term, I intend to use the Mayor's office to help better link City Hall to our diverse cultural communities and our youth. I will also encourage our senior staff to develop new ways to ensure employees working at city hall represent the diverse peoples and languages spoken in the city.

Vancouver is blessed with highly skilled staff who maintain our status as the most liveable city in the world. Tightening labour markets will present challenges over the next five years to attract, retain and develop our work force. All of us should be grateful for the front line workers who serve us so well. Our recruitment theme "Powered by Innovation" should be more than a slogan as we provide interesting and rewarding careers.

The Mayor's office will seek out every opportunity to engage our youth in order that they better understand the importance of civic governance in their lives. I will work with our School Board to introduce a new Civic Youth Council that will take place at City Hall next year.

I also plan to meet another campaign promise of re-instating the Vancouver Caucus model that was dropped by the previous administration. By inviting our provincial and federal counterparts to the same table and working together, we stand a better chance at helping to reach many of the goals and initiatives I have outlined today.

In reference to my leadership style on this Council, I can assure you that I am committed to restoring civility and decorum. The Council Chamber is a place to conduct the people's business. It is a place that deserves respect, and I will do my best to ensure every voice is heard. I expect this same respect for the Chamber will also be shown by all of our Councilors as well as our citizens.

It is time to end the endless debates. It is time to put aside ideology and get down to doing the people's business. We have a city that needs leadership...we have an Olympics to host...we have a great story to tell the world.

We also have some of the best and brightest public sector employees that when put to the test, I believe can rise to almost any occasion. I want to give them hope that a City Hall under my leadership will encourage them to work hard, think creatively and continue providing value for the tax dollar.

I have outlined in this inaugural speech a number of key goals that I believe will help to set the framework for sustained growth while maintaining our position as the most liveable city in the world.

I trust that we can move forward as a Council, think progressively, act prudently and return Vancouver to its rightful position as a leader in the GVRD, British Columbia and Canada.

Earlier, I suggested that we all ask ourselves: "What kind of city do we want the world to find when they arrive in 2010?" I look forward to working with Council, staff and citizens to answer this question

and doing the hard work to make our dream a reality. It will be up to all of us to take the opportunities presented to us and create lasting legacies for our citizens.

Thank you.

Sam Sullivan