Mayor Lowry's Inaugural Address

Members of Council, members of our community, and municipal staff, it is both a privilege and an honour to speak before you this evening.

I would like to begin by congratulating each member of new Council and welcome Councillor Tavis Joron and Councillor Brien Devries as they begin their service to the people of Mississippi Mills.

Over the past several weeks, I have spent time meeting individually with members of Council, and I have been encouraged by every conversation.

While we each bring different experiences, perspectives, and priorities to this table, I have heard common values throughout those discussions: respect, collaboration, thoughtful decision-making, and a genuine commitment to serving our community.

As we begin this new term, I find myself reflecting on the journey that brought me here. Twelve years ago, I joined Council as its youngest member. I was full of ideas, eager to contribute, deeply proud to serve the community that raised me, and absolutely convinced I could change the world.

Twelve years later, I'm a little wiser.

What I have learned is that meaningful change rarely comes from one person. It comes from people coming together around a shared purpose and committing themselves to the long work of building something better.

Whether we arrived here through an election campaign or by acclamation, we now share a common responsibility: to serve the people of Mississippi Mills. Our role is to listen carefully, ask thoughtful questions, and make decisions that reflect the long-term interests of the community. It is a responsibility that I'm sure humble each of us, and one we never take for granted.

As for this new Council, I have come to an interesting realization. For the first time since I was first elected 12 years ago, I am no longer the youngest member of Council.

When I joined municipal government, I was just a little older than Tavis is today and a little younger than Brien. For many years, I was able to play the youth card. That card has now officially expired.

While the average age of Council may have dropped significantly this term with Tavis and Brien coming on board, the experience around the horseshoe remains substantial. Together, the returning members of this Council: Deputy Mayor Rick Minnille, Councillor Jane Torrance, Councillor Bev Holmes, Councillor Mary Lou Souter and I – we bring nearly six decades of municipal leadership. The blend of fresh perspectives and seasoned experience, along with the professional expertise, volunteerism, and community involvement we collectively bring to the table, positions us well for the work ahead.

And there is important work ahead.

When I first joined Council, growth was something we discussed almost in theoretical terms. Today, it is our reality.

Between 2016 and 2021, Mississippi Mills grew by 12%, more than double the provincial growth rate. Looking ahead over the next 20 years, Mississippi Mills is anticipated to grow by 71%, with Almonte alone projected to grow by 122%. To put that in perspective, Lanark County's projected growth over that same period is 36% and Ontario's is 37%.
Those numbers tell an important story.

More and more people are choosing to build their lives here, or come back and raise their own families here in the community that raised them. That speaks to the strength of our community and the quality of life we enjoy. At the same time, growth brings real pressures and difficult choices.

It places increasing demands on roads, water and wastewater systems, recreation facilities, childcare, emergency services, and the infrastructure residents rely on every day.

And behind every budget line, every planning application, and every policy discussion are *real people*.

A young family wondering whether home ownership will ever be within reach.

A senior hoping to remain in the community they helped build.

A local business facing economic uncertainty.

A farmer navigating rising input costs and changing conditions.

A volunteer organization working tirelessly to support growing needs.

These challenges are real. They are complex. And they are not unique to Mississippi Mills. No municipality can solve these challenges alone. But local government can do what it has always done best.

We can bring people together, plan responsibly, invest wisely, advocate effectively, and make decisions that reflect the values and priorities of the people we serve.

It is also important to acknowledge that we will not always agree. *Nor should we*. Each of us on Council brings different experiences, perspectives, and priorities to the table.

Healthy communities are not built through uniform thinking. They are built when people respectfully challenge ideas, consider new viewpoints, and remain focused on finding solutions. Our residents do not all see issues the same way, and their Council should reflect that diversity of thought.

Our responsibility as local decision-makers is to come prepared, to do our homework, to rely on the expertise and professional advice of our staff, and to listen respectfully to one another.

Sometimes that means asking difficult questions. More importantly, it means asking the right questions.

It means remaining curious, open to new information, willing to challenge our own assumptions, and committed to making decisions based on evidence and the long-term interests of our community.

I have also learned that every municipal issue is connected to at least three other issues, a couple pieces of legislation, and a budget line.

The solutions are rarely simple. Which is precisely why collaboration matters. The next four years will require us to think long term while acting in the present. We will continue shaping the growth, that we know is coming. We will continue investing in infrastructure and work with partners and other levels of government to create housing opportunities for people at every stage of life.

We will support our local economy, protect the character of our villages and rural areas, and ensure that Mississippi Mills remains a place where people can build a life, raise a family, grow a business, and age with dignity.

And perhaps most importantly, Council will keep listening. Not only to those who agree with us, but especially to those who challenge us.

The future of Mississippi Mills is not shaped by Council alone. It is shaped by residents, businesses, volunteers, community organizations, and everyone who chooses to invest their time, energy, and ideas in this community.

I encourage residents to stay engaged. Attend meetings. Participate in consultations and public information centres. Ask questions. Share ideas. Volunteer. Support local organizations. Continue helping shape the future of this remarkable community.
Over the last 12 years, I have watched Mississippi Mills grow not only in population, **but in confidence.**

I have seen neighbours continue to support neighbours. I have seen volunteers accomplish extraordinary things. I have seen people come together during difficult moments and emerge stronger because of it.

That is why I am optimistic.

Because what makes Mississippi Mills remarkable is not our historic downtowns, beautiful countryside, rivers, trails, farms, businesses, villages, or even the Hallmark movies that have introduced our community to audiences around the world...

What makes this place extraordinary is *the people who call it home*. Their generosity, resilience, kindness, and willingness to step forward when needed are the foundation of everything we have built together.

There is an old saying: if you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together. The next four years will bring challenges. They will also bring opportunities.

I am optimistic because I know this community. I know the commitment of those who have chosen to serve around this Council table. I know the dedication and expertise of our staff. And I know the strength, generosity, and resilience of the people of Mississippi Mills.

When we approach our work with humility, respect, kindness, and a genuine commitment to one another, there is very little beyond our reach.

Tonight, we begin the next chapter in the story of Mississippi Mills.

Let's write it together.

Thank you.



Mayor Christa Lowry
Municipality of Mississippi Mills