



“Building on a Winning Record”

Inaugural Address by

**Mayor Frank Scarpitti**

Inaugural Meeting of the

2010 – 2014

Council of the

Town of Markham

Tuesday, December 7, 2010 ♦ 7:30 p.m.

Markham Theatre

Anthony Roman Centre



Welcome.

Good evening Honoured Guests, ladies and gentlemen, Members of Council, Staff, Members of the Media, neighbours, friends all. It is indeed my privilege as your Mayor, of what I believe to be the best community in Ontario, in Canada, to welcome each and every one of you to the 2010 Inaugural Council Meeting.

It is fitting that this inaugural is being held here at Centre stage at the Markham Theatre. Tonight is our “opening night” and it is the largest inaugural celebration in our history.

Markham reflects a proud heritage combined with our rich and diverse, and growing community. We are the destination of choice of premier Canadian businesses; the destination of choice for those who wish to raise their families in a progressive, open and safe environment. Markham has no equal in the Greater Toronto Area, in fact, anywhere!

Did this just happen by accident? No, it did not!

On the contrary, community-minded men and women, like those sitting on this stage, have provided the leadership over the years to guide Markham to the position we proudly occupy today. To them we owe a debt of gratitude.

It was no accident that in 2009 and 2010, Markham was the only municipality in the Greater Toronto Area to achieve a zero percent tax increase.

This was the result of Council’s hard work, their dedication, and their ability to function as a team that made us number one. To each of them, please join with me to offer our collective thanks. They deserve it.

Can we continue to raise the bar and to deliver results that other municipalities can only dream of? Ladies and gentlemen, with this new team, with the foundation that the previous Council has provided, the answer is a resounding YES.

But before I outline some of the challenges and goals that we face in the coming term, I would like to recognize and thank some special people.

First of all, there is the love of my life – my wife Nancy. Too often, while I have been attending to the needs of our growing municipality, she has carried the extra burden of raising our children, Alessandra, Michael and Daniel, who I am so proud of.

Yes, we each have a personal life journey, but without loving family and friends, the road would be so much more difficult. Nancy – thank you.

To my mother Lucia and in memory of my late father Antonio, let me say that the lessons that Paul and I were taught every day in our home have become the very principles I follow in public service. To you both, we learned more from what you did and the example you set. Thank you.

To Paul, thank you for your hard work during the campaign, but most of all for being my Brother. They don't come any better.

Today's elections are sophisticated events and like all members of Council, we recognize that running them takes special skills, dedication and commitment that are rarely found.

My co-chairs Rick Crispi and Del Silvestri, in my mind are not only the best of the best, but I am proud to say, are my friends. The enthusiastic campaign committee, along with the team of volunteers that they assembled and the results they achieved on Election Day – over 85% of the votes cast – is now one of the highlights of my political career.

To my entire campaign team, please accept my thanks for your counsel and hard work during the election. Without you, I could never have achieved the results I did. To each of you, thank you.

Finally, to Markham residents, let me simply say thank you for your ongoing support and encouragement. I am honoured and humbled to continue to serve the community I love.

On October 25, Markham residents elected this new Council. Collectively, those returning have over 114 years of Council experience.

Please join with me in welcoming back: Regional Councillors Jack Heath, Jim Jones and Gord Landon; and Councillors Valerie Burke, Don Hamilton, Carolina Moretti, Logan Kanapathi, and Alex Chiu.

I am exceptionally pleased to introduce the following new members of our team: Regional Councillor Joe Li, and Councillors Howard Shore, Colin Campbell, and Alan Ho. Your ideas, concerns and issues resonated with our voters and along with every member of Council and Staff, I welcome you. I look to you to further strengthen our team and to continue our leadership as the best municipality in the GTA.

Before I introduce and thank each of the Councillors who are not returning, please allow me to thank them for their hard work and dedication. We have just completed the most productive four years in the history of Markham and in my judgment, we established ourselves as the best Council in Ontario.

We could not have done this without the hard work and contributions of the following valued former members of Council: Joe Virgilio, Former Regional Councillor; Erin Shapero, Former Ward 2 Councillor; John Webster, Former Ward 5 Councillor; and Dan Horchik, Former Ward 6 Councillor. Please help me in expressing our appreciation.

I would also like to acknowledge the incredible contribution of the late Regional Councillor Tony Wong. He will never be forgotten in our community.

It is remarkable looking back that during such a short period of time, we initiated a strategic plan aptly titled *Building Markham's Future Together*, which committed to deliver no less than five key initiatives. And with your hard work, we accomplished them all. In brief they were: An **Integrated Leisure Master Plan**, which provided a long-term holistic approach to parks, recreational, cultural and library needs of our community; A **Made In Markham Growth Plan** that addressed the provincial government's directive to accommodate growth in Markham, but responded in a way to protect our existing neighbourhoods while creating new sustainable communities; **Markham's 2020 Economic Blueprint** was designed to build on our hi-tech and life science cluster while attracting new commercial sectors such as financial services and digital new media; A **Diversity Action Plan – Everyone Welcome** is a strategy that lays out the steps that we need to take to achieve an even more inclusive Markham; and finally, **Greenprint – Markham's Community Sustainability Plan**, a community driven long-term strategy that addresses environmental health, economic vitality, social well-being and cultural vibrancy to keep Markham in the forefront of places to live.

So where do we go from here?

Yes, we can boast that we indeed had a winning record during the last Council term. However, that was yesterday.

The residents of Markham need us now to focus forward, to set a new high water mark in providing outstanding services while being ever mindful of their hard earned tax dollars.

Just like an Olympic athlete who trains to run faster, to jump higher, to throw farther, the men and women who have won your votes know only too well that records are meant to be broken. So tonight is the start of a new term, the start of a new agenda. If you will allow me, as Mayor, I am asking for your undivided commitment and hard work so that we can stand proudly, as did the past Council, when our achievements are being measured four years from now.

If the words, "A Winning Record," defined the last four years, perhaps the new Council will adopt the new strategy of: Building on a Winning Record.

Let's move the bar up. Let's build on the two previous zero percent tax increases. Let's adopt the position that raising taxes should be the option of last resort.

I am proposing that we set up an At Your Service Task Force to ensure that services are indeed accessible, appropriate and respond to the needs of all residents at a very high level.

We need to launch the Markham portal, Access Markham, so many of our services can be accessed 24/7 online. We need to consider having our staff available at times convenient to our residents. When you're available, we're available. We can no longer do business the same way as we always have before. We cannot be limited by old methodologies and outdated business models. It's not enough to turn the page. We have to write a new book.

Our Council will have an enormous responsibility in planning the future communities in Markham. These new neighbourhoods will welcome families and allow them to pursue a healthy and vibrant lifestyle that is synonymous with Markham.

We will also see the beginnings of new types of urban built form in Markham. Langstaff is a state of the art, world class, transit dependent community located at Yonge and the 407. Designed by renowned architect and urban planner, Peter Calthorpe, the Langstaff plan is one of the most exciting in Canada.

Markham Centre is now beginning to take shape as the most sustainable downtown in North America. While there's excitement in Markham, we need to focus on creating a premier destination for the entire GTA.

With each passing day, the need for the Yonge subway extension to Highway 7 becomes more critical. Markham Council has always taken the position – Subway now. Now we must get the shovel in the ground.

Now that the infrastructure is in place to accommodate more GO trains, we need the additional funding to provide more frequent two-way service between our community and Union Station.

Our Council takes great pride in representing the most culturally diverse community in Canada. We have all witnessed both the economic prosperity and the cultural enrichment that diversity has brought to Markham. Markham Council will establish a Committee with the objective of introducing a new premier Town-wide celebration building the bridges between the cultures of our Community.

With Markham's Greenprint, our Community Sustainability Plan that is near final adoption by Council, Markham has set in motion the building blocks to be one of the most liveable and sustainable urban communities in North America.

Last term, our Trees for Tomorrow program set out to plant more trees in four years than the previous decade. This meant a goal of 75,000 new trees. We greatly surpassed that goal. This term, our goal will be a minimum of 90,000 new trees. We must continue the work in making Markham a greener and better place to live and work.

Markham will move forward with its vision for the Rouge Park. A key objective of our vision is to create a major conservation area that will allow for picnicking, outdoor activities and community events while at the same time maintaining a balance between agriculture and natural environment.

As wonderful as Markham is, one of our greatest challenges as our community evolves will be to enhance the many opportunities that define the quality of life.

Council recently purchased 100 acres for the creation of a major sports park. One of the top priorities will be the planning, design and construction of the initial phase. Our work will also begin in earnest for the 2015 Pan Am Games. To date, Markham has been awarded the 50-metre Pool, which will host the water polo championships.

We will also move forward on the planning and design for a new community centre in the southeast part of Markham. This area has the largest number of children per household. In the end, we are not just building a community centre but strengthening the foundation of a better community.

Markham has endorsed the Cycling, Pathways and Trails Master Plans. This initiative is a top priority, which is strongly supported by this community. We will move forward with an aggressive implementation plan during this term of Council. This will allow our residents of all ages to enjoy and experience the open spaces, natural environment, and points of interests available in the community.

In closing, I would like to extend my thanks to the Markham staff for their professionalism and commitment. Without you, Council could never hope to achieve our goals and objectives. Please join with me ladies and gentlemen in expressing our appreciation. They are amongst the finest public servants anywhere.

Let me state without reservation, the residents of Markham deserve the best staff at all times. They deserve men and women who are continually thinking of solutions that will better respond to your needs. If you can continue to offer this level of service, Council and residents will be well served.

To all residents, I ask for your continued engagement to help us reach our goals. To the service clubs, religious institutions, sports groups, business leaders, youth, seniors, charities and volunteers of all stripes, you are the lifeline of our communities. Please continue to help Council Build on a Winning Record.

I am pleased to say that in the next few months, you will see more tangible evidence of that Winning Record. Thanks to the Federal/Provincial/Municipal Infrastructure program, we will be re-opening a renovated and expanded Thornhill Community Centre and Library. We will open a full-size artificial turf soccer field with a dome next to St. Robert Catholic High School and four new indoor tennis courts at the Angus Glen Community Centre. And my personal favourite, one I fought to keep on the list, the largest outdoor artificial skating rink in the GTA – right here at the Markham Civic Centre.

Once again, congratulations to all Members of Council and thank you to all of you for being a part of this very special celebration.

