

**MAYOR MALCOLM BRODIE
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RICHMOND CITY COUNCIL MEETING**

Introduction

Tonight we take a pause from the regular business of Council to look back on the previous year, our accomplishments and achievements as a City and a community. More importantly, we also look forward and prepare ourselves for a new year of challenge and opportunity.

2006 was another extraordinary year for the City of Richmond. As the first full year of a new Council term, it was a remarkable time, full of opportunity and growth, challenges and achievements mixed with moments of both celebration and sadness.

It was a year of new beginnings, as we laid the cornerstones for projects and initiatives that will dramatically change our community for the better. It was also a year of reflection and planning for the future of Richmond, in order to create a solid roadmap to guide us deeper into the 21st century.

During the past year, we made substantial progress on two of the largest projects ever seen in the City of Richmond: the Canada Line and the Richmond Speed Skating Oval. Just as importantly, it was a year in which we completed many other projects in all areas, including sports and recreation, health and wellness, transportation and planning as well as arts and heritage. Through sound financial planning, innovation and a ceaseless pursuit of excellence, we've also made numerous service improvements that positively impact our community. At the same time, we have paid attention to the basic and critical day to day work of efficiently delivering the services our citizens count upon to lead their daily lives.

As we look forward to 2007 and beyond, your Council is committed to the continued pursuit of our vision for Richmond.

Milestones in 2006

As we reflect, there are a number of notable milestones that occurred during 2006.

Our continued maturation as a City was reflected in a number of important anniversaries. Richmond Hospital celebrated its 40th anniversary and the Richmond Women's Centre marked its 30th. While Kwantlen University College celebrated 25 years as an educational facility, the Minoru Seniors Society and the Friends of the Richmond Archives celebrated their 20th anniversaries. Each of these organizations have contributed much to the individual and collective lives of our community. Too often, we take such public service for granted. It is important on these occasions to salute these and all the others in Richmond who work so hard to make all of our lives better.

Many of these organizations rely heavily upon the services of volunteers, as does the City. Again in 2006, volunteers provided untold hours of service to our community in every aspect imaginable. In honour of all our volunteers, I'd like to highlight the work of two of those groups.

This year, 140 individuals participated in our Emergency Social Services program: training to provide relief in case of emergency; delivering emergency preparedness presentations to community groups and responding to actual emergency situations. These volunteers alone donated 3,500 hours of their time to this critical program. This included responding to six actual emergencies, where they assisted approximately 250 people displaced from their homes. Thanks to our volunteers we are now also offering Emergency Preparedness classes in Cantonese and Mandarin to ensure our entire community is prepared. Their work is extraordinary and we owe them a deep debt of gratitude.

Another remarkable group of volunteers are amongst the fire fighters and staff of Richmond Fire Rescue. In February and March of this year, 24 of them travelled to Sri Lanka where they helped build new homes for the residents who are still struggling to recover from the devastating tsunami in late 2004. The volunteers contributed hundreds of hours of their own time to raise the funds necessary and to participate in the actual relief mission. This group is now planning another relief mission to Thailand next year. We should never forget the important service they provide both on and off the job for our community and for others.

A number of special events in 2006 merit mention. This past summer, we were delighted to host my colleague Mayor Monique Worth from our Sister City of Pierrefonds, Quebec. Mayor Worth joined us for the Steveston Salmon Festival and other events. We look forward to 2007 when we expect some special celebrations to mark the 40th anniversary of this Sister City relationship.

For the first time ever in its 21 year history, the Gemini Awards, which honour excellence in Canadian television, ventured outside Toronto. The live-broadcast awards gala was held right here in Richmond at the River Rock Theatre. Richmond was delighted to be chosen to host such a prestigious event and we look forward to many more such events to be held in our community.

Indeed, Richmond is developing a rich, vibrant and diverse cultural life – from popular traditional community events and institutions such as the Steveston Salmon Festival, Nibbles and Bites, City Centre Celebration, Multifest to Lunar New Year celebrations, the Gateway Theatre and Richmond Cultural Centre. Our cultural mix has grown to include such events as the popular Lulu Series of arts lectures, Asian Heritage Month, the Maritime Festival and the sold-out Concerts on the Dock series at Britannia Heritage Shipyard, Richmond Playday and the Richmond Dragon Boat Festival. The Richmond Night Market has also become a cultural phenomenon attracting 900,000 visitors in 2006 bringing the attention of both international visitors and media to our City.

Last summer Richmond also provided most of the venues for the Maccabi Games, which brought more than 1,200 teen Jewish athletes to our region. The newly inaugurated Richmond Rockets speed skating club began its inaugural season by hosting the BC High Performance Speed Skating Camp for aspiring athletes from around the province. We excitedly anticipate many more sporting events in Richmond in the years to come as our expanded and outstanding sport and recreational infrastructure allows us to become a leader in regional, national and international sport hosting.

Sadly, 2006 was the year in which we lost some great community leaders.

From humble beginnings, Jack Bell rose to become a successful business operator in the local peat moss and cranberry industries. He is best known and loved for his philanthropic contributions which include the Jack Bell Research Centre and Health Science Centre at Vancouver General Hospital, UBC's Jack Bell School of Social Work and the Jack Bell Foundation. In 1992, his foundation pioneered the first large-scale organized ride-sharing program in Canada which currently operates over 100 vehicles in its fleet. It also facilitates ride sharing through an innovative internet web application. He was a true philanthropist and visionary. Our community feels his loss.

All of us at this table are here because we believe in the importance of public service. We know that we can make a positive contribution as your elected representatives. Perhaps no one ever better exemplified that commitment than Gilbert J. Blair.

Gil Blair was Mayor of Richmond from 1974 to 1990 after being a member of Council from 1971 to 1973. He was a humble, yet proud man who selflessly gave of his time to help build the Richmond we have today.

Gil's ancestors arrived in Richmond in 1879, the same year the municipality of Richmond was incorporated. Born in 1926, he graduated from UBC in agriculture and began working on the family farm in south Richmond in the early 1950s. In 1970, when he began his career in local politics, his father had just retired as an alderman.

Quoted in a local newspaper in 1993 – Gil said his inspiration for public service came from his father, Archie Blair, who served for eight years on School Board and 22 years on Council. Gil was clearly very proud of his father's record of service to Richmond. As Gil was given the honour of being named a Freeman of the City in 1991, he remarked that his father proudly had that honour bestowed upon him in October 1979.

During his tenure as Mayor, some of the significant milestones included the opening of London Farm, the Gateway Theatre and Garry Point Park. Richmond also celebrated its centennial while he championed the efforts to have Richmond changed from township to City status.

Gil Blair was a pioneer, a role model and a leader. Richmond is richer for the time he was with us.

Building a Better City

In a year in which so much attention was focussed on our major civic projects, your Council is particularly proud of the many other significant and remarkable new programs and amenities that came to fruition in 2006. Many happened due to partnerships with other community institutions and stakeholders.

This fall, we proudly celebrated the opening of the new Hugh Boyd artificial field complex. This outstanding complex includes six acres of playing surface and is believed to be the largest of its type in North America. It is a huge boost to our playing field inventory, as we are far better able to meet the year-round needs of the sporting community. Most significantly, this project was

realized through a partnership with the community and substantial financial contribution from the Richmond Soccer Alliance.

Similarly, design and preparatory work has begun on the Steveston Water Park. This new feature will continue the revitalization of Steveston Park, allowing it to better serve the growing needs of one of our community's most popular neighbourhoods. We appreciate the sizeable financial contributions of the Steveston Community Society so that the Park will open in the spring of 2007.

East Richmond gained an important new meeting and event space with the opening of the Cambie Community Gathering Place in King George Park. Created with community financial support and design input, the gathering place is unique in its design to bring people together.

Another project of note is Script Inside Outside, the City's newest public art project. It is a lighting installation on the south side of Gateway Theatre's flytower, which uses lighting and dramatic messaging to deliver the theatre's vision.

We have also continued the implementation of the master plan for the 63-acre Terra Nova Rural Park, a celebration of our community's natural beauty and agricultural heritage. In 2006, the new demonstration garden opened. The move of the community gardens and Sharing Farm gardens to Terra Nova was completed in 2006 and a new Edible Schoolyard Program was launched to promote youth knowledge and participation in food production. Design work is continuing on the planned restoration of a number of heritage buildings within the park. The Richmond Foundation has also launched a major fundraising initiative to support the ongoing development of this park.

The City is also continuing to implement its master plan for the re-development of the Britannia Heritage Shipyard. Substantial progress was made in 2006 including construction of boardwalks, wetlands and a new parking area.

Richmond Public Library continues to be recognized as one of North America's leaders. In 2006, we were delighted to complete and celebrate the year-long renovation and expansion of the library's main Brighouse branch. The completed renovation project includes 3,200 square feet of increased public space, including a brand new Kids' Place, a Language Learning Centre and an improved Computer Centre. The Library continues to set the mark in service delivery, once again being first in Canada in circulation and second in visits per capita for cities our size.

The City was pleased to welcome and support the John MS Lecky UBC Boathouse. The Boathouse will be the permanent home for the UBC and St. George's rowing programs, currently among the best in the world. The Boathouse will also host many competitive rowing regattas and the annual Richmond Dragon Boat Festival. Through partnership with the City, the Boathouse will also offer many community rowing and paddling programs for both youth and adults.

In yet another partnership initiative, the Garratt Wellness Centre was officially opened this past spring. A joint program with Vancouver Coastal Health, the Garratt Centre has allowed more than 1,100 residents to improve their personal health and wellness through medically-directed activity programs.

Council was pleased to finally resolve the ownership of the historic Steveston Interurban Tram. The City negotiated outright ownership of this important heritage asset. Planning is now underway to complete the restoration of the tram and determine its permanent home here in Richmond.

Transportation continues to be one of the top priorities for Richmond residents. In 2006, we continued to work on improving our transportation network, particularly in the City Centre. We achieved our long-held objective of acquiring the CPR corridor from No. 2 Road to Sea Island Way. This will allow completion of the North Loop Road, a key component in the City Centre ring road network, which is designed to alleviate traffic congestion in and around our downtown.

Construction was also completed on the Browngate Road extension this year. Work began on the widening of Westminster Highway from Nelson Road to Highway 91 for completion next year. We will then see the completion of another new segment of Lansdowne Road and the widening of Gilbert Road, north of Elmbridge and the opening of the River Road realignment.

Next week, the long awaited City Centre shuttle-bus service will be introduced, improving transit service around our central core. The City also worked with TransLink to secure a number of other transit service improvements, including major increases in service to Newton, UBC, Metrotown and on the 98-B Line.

We also continued to expand our network of bicycle lanes and routes, extending the bicycle lanes along Garden City Way. Additional bicycling improvements will be made along Shell Road.

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

While we are proud of the many new offerings, Richmond City Council has also placed considerable emphasis on continuous improvement of the day-to-day services we provide to the community.

Community safety continues to be a major focus of City Council. Last year, we introduced a new bylaw to allow us to recover the extraordinary costs of dealing with marijuana grow-ops and other drug labs. Through this new bylaw, the City has recovered \$400,000 in enforcement costs and fees. This financial consequence is encouraging property owners to be more vigilant in making certain that their buildings are not used for illicit purposes. Council has now proposed an Electrical Safety Inspection Program, which will provide us with yet another tool to eliminate grow-ops.

The City has also been working closely with the Safe Communities Alliance, a partnership of many groups concerned with public safety. In 2006, this group, with the support of Richmond Fire Rescue and other City departments, launched the new Meth Watch program, which also deters illicit drug activity in our community.

As we look forward, we have launched a full review of policing service in Richmond to ensure we have the appropriate model and levels of service to support our community's needs.

Over the past few years, Council has invested heavily in community safety and realized many dividends. Just one example is a significant reduction in auto crime, dropping by over 23% in 2005, and a further 27% in the first half of 2006.

Natural disasters are occurring with alarming frequency around the globe. We must be vigilant in protecting ourselves against such catastrophes. In 2006, the City implemented a new emergency public notification system, which will allow us to quickly notify large numbers of residences in event of an emergency. Eight satellite phones were purchased and deployed along with 20 UHF radios to key facilities throughout the City and amateur radio equipment was installed in 10 key areas. This equipment will allow us to maintain critical communications in times of crisis.

Our island community is always mindful of the threats posed by the river and sea around us, including the threat of global warming. With that in mind we recently adopted a draft Flood Protection Strategy and we look forward to adopting a final strategy shortly.

Our Richmond Fire Rescue department has always focussed on the safety of our community. It became apparent this year that changes were necessary to make the department a more diverse and inclusive place in which to work. Council commissioned a major review of workplace policies and procedures. Based on that review and other initiatives, change is taking place. A new employee Code of Conduct was implemented, respectful workplace and other training has been provided for staff and management. Additional training is planned. A number of improvements have been made to the physical environment in our fire halls. We are revising our fire fighter recruitment and selection processes to create a more diverse workforce, while always maintaining our high standards of emergency response.

This year, Council also approved and implemented a long-awaited Tree Protection Bylaw, which safeguards our urban forest for the enjoyment of current and future generations. Similarly, the City has also developed a new soils management bylaw to ensure the preservation of viable farmland and our environment.

Our social environment is also important to the City and its Council. Just a few examples from the past year include the City providing the site and funding towards a proposed new child care facility in the Hamilton area. We facilitated the impending relocation of Richmond Family Place to DeBeck House. Council was also pleased to provide needed support to allow the development of the new Pinegrove Park Place care facility, creating 120 intermediate care beds for our community. Richmond has also taken a leadership role in implementing a Responsible Gaming Strategy for our community, which has become a model for the Province.

Planning for the Future

Richmond has entered a new phase of growth. We are maturing and evolving as a City. With a strong economy, much of this change is happening rapidly. But your Council is carefully planning for this growth and change for the benefit of our community.

Most of the new growth is occurring within our City Centre, which will help create a more dynamic, vibrant and liveable downtown while protecting our existing single family neighbourhoods from the pressure of a region-wide population boom. To ensure growth is well-

managed and appropriate, we have launched a major update of our City Centre Area Plan. Public consultation on the new City Centre Plan is well underway.

Preparatory work is also underway for the updating of our Official Community Plan. Much has changed in Richmond and within the region since the OCP was last updated. We need to review this critical document to serve the future hopes and aspirations of our community.

As we plan, one of the major challenges confronting our City has been the supply of affordable housing. For Richmond to be a truly liveable city, our community must be affordable for all segments of our population. An update of our Affordable Housing Strategy has been one of our priorities this past year. Council recently adopted a new draft Affordable Housing Strategy with the final strategy expected to be adopted early next year.

In the interim, we have already taken a number of actions to address affordable housing issues, including:

- new measures to increase the supply of legal secondary suites;
- a moratorium on demolitions of rental housing properties;
- a proposed standards of maintenance bylaw;
- approval of a high-rise development, which includes an affordable seniors housing component;
- providing for affordable housing within the Richmond Oval lands development; and
- development of a proposed new City Wide Amenity Contribution Policy, which supports our Affordable Housing Strategy and other social planning needs.

As our community grows and matures, we need to have the public facilities and services necessary to meet our needs. In 2006, Council adopted the overall Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Master Plan. Work is now underway on implementing that strategy and developing a number of specific plans to realize its objectives, including a Volunteer Strategy, Museum and Heritage Strategy and other initiatives.

We are particularly proud of the adoption of the new Everyone Can Play field use strategy, which will remove barriers preventing any of our youth or other community members from enjoying the benefits of using our outstanding and growing inventory of playing fields within Richmond.

One of Richmond's many strengths is the distinct and diverse communities within our City. We are continuing to nurture those communities through such measures as the adoption of the innovative West Cambie Area Plan, support of the South Arm Vibrant Community Initiative and development of the Steveston Village Conservation Strategy.

Creating a Sustainable Community

In Richmond, we care about preserving and protecting our environment for the benefit of future generations. Our City is committed to being a sustainable community and we have continued to take practical steps to reduce our footprint on the environment. This year, we completed a new State of the Environment report, which assessed our current environmental health and provided us with measurable indicators we can use to guide us as we move forward.

Council previously approved a sustainable building policy, with a goal of achieving the highest standards practical in building practices. This new policy was put into action this year in the construction of new Hamilton and Burkeville Fire Halls. They incorporated many innovative green building measures as application will be made for LEED certification.

Continuing to lead, this year Richmond reduced its civic energy consumption by another \$20,000, meaning our annual savings from such measures are in excess of \$500,000. We are also setting a goal of a further 7% reduction over the next three years.

The City has a large fleet of different types of vehicles and we have also taken steps to make them more efficient. In 2006, we purchased four zero emission ice resurfacers for use at our Richmond Arenas. We also introduced the use of Smart cars within the City fleet, augmenting our existing use of hybrid vehicles. We implemented ongoing use of a bio-diesel fuel blend to power the City's diesel vehicles. The City is also working with local schools and students to extend our anti-idling program to reduce emissions.

Council has also extended the voluntary water metering program which is helping to significantly reduce local water consumption. In 2006 – 1,500 more homes signed up for the volunteer water metering program.

Environmental protection is a responsibility of everyone. We are pleased that many in our community have joined with us in this important task. Earlier this year, we held a recognition event for the many volunteers who participate in our Partners For Beautification programs. Those volunteers have contributed more than 15,000 hours of their own time to help preserve and enhance our City's natural beauty.

Richmond residents have also embraced our recycling program. Through their efforts we collected over 21,000 tonnes of materials through City recycling programs, meaning those materials will be reused and diverted from landfills.

Building for Tomorrow

Your Council has a bold vision for the City of Richmond. In order to fulfil this vision we have strategically pursued three major projects which will shape our community for generations to come and define Richmond as one of the great cities of our region and nation.

In the past year, we have made substantial progress in making the Canada Line and Richmond Olympic Oval realities.

Just a few weeks ago, the City held a ceremony to mark the pouring of the first concrete at the Oval site. Now the building will start to rise out of the ground. We are pleased to report that we remain on target to open the Oval in the fall of 2008. With the majority of our construction tenders now awarded, we remain on target to meet our capital construction budget.

The construction kickoff capped a busy year of work on the Oval. Council approved both the overall building design and planning framework for the surrounding neighbourhood. We issued the RFP for the development and sale of the surrounding lands and we look forward to an announcement on the successful conclusion of that process in the near future. Richmond is indebted to the Oval Advisory Committees for their valuable input.

A public art plan for the Oval and surrounding precinct was recently approved. We have secured the participation of internationally-acclaimed Musqueam artist Susan Point to develop one of the signature public art pieces. We were also successful in securing funding for the construction of a wood roof, thus pioneering the use of an exciting new made-in-BC design and showcasing our province's leading natural resource. Council has also approved the possible inclusion of a community paddling centre within the Oval, which will provide a unique new opportunity that will have broad benefits for the entire community.

An exciting post-Games legacy program model has been developed, which ensures the Oval will serve the entire community, featuring outstanding sports and wellness services and amenities, as well as being home to general community, cultural use and special events. We will be working closely with our community stakeholders as we further define the actual day-to-day uses of this tremendous new asset for Richmond.

On No.3 Road, Richmond has had the satisfaction of seeing the beginning of construction on the Canada Line. Our community has fought long and hard to bring rapid transit service to Richmond. Our hopes have been dashed time and time again. Now, we have tangible evidence that, in a few short years, we will see our hopes realized.

While construction activity for the Canada Line begins to make its impact felt in Richmond, the City has been busy ensuring this project fulfils all our objectives. We have worked closely with the project managers as well as our business and residential community to mitigate the disruptive impacts of this huge construction project in the middle of our business core.

We are determined to ensure the Canada Line is properly integrated into our community. The City has developed an extraordinary new vision for No. 3 Road. Through the Streetscape Study we have envisioned a dynamic, pedestrian-oriented No. 3 Road, transforming Richmond's City Centre into one of the most liveable and desirable addresses in the region.

To ensure we achieve those objectives we have also paid close attention to the Canada Line station design and demanded changes to meet our standards for architectural design and functionality, community integration, accessibility and crime prevention. To that end, we negotiated significant improvements in station design to better meet community needs.

Our third major project is the acquisition of a portion of the Garden City Lands. Access to these lands is vital to the City's long-term plans and community needs. In 2006, application was unsuccessfully made for exclusion of Garden City Lands from the Agricultural Land Reserve. Council was disappointed with that decision. We will continue to aggressively pursue the completion of our agreement so that these lands are put to the best use for our communities – to include new parks and other public amenities including Tourism Richmond's proposed trade and exhibition centre.

Sound Financial Management

Richmond's achievements and our future planning initiatives are considerable. We have a bold, ambitious and visionary work program that we are successfully delivering to the community.

We could not successfully do so without a sound financial foundation. City Council has adopted a long-term financial management strategy that provides the resources the City needs while it gives good value to taxpayers without overburdening them.

We continue to hold the line on taxes by keeping them at stable levels linked to the consumer price index. We have significantly improved the balance in our reserves in excess of \$140 million – vital for meeting our long-term infrastructure needs. We have also undertaken the largest capital building program in the City's history without costly external borrowing.

The City also continues to seek ways to offset our costs. Just a few examples in 2006 are \$2.16 million received in grants from TransLink and ICBC for transportation improvements; approximately \$3 million in grants related to the Richmond Oval; \$500,000 in federal grants for sustainability initiatives at Hamilton Fire Hall and \$4 million in additional funding from our Canada Line partners to support upgrades at the Brighthouse Station bus loop.

Growth Supports Improvements

Many of our improvements can be attributed to the continued and managed growth of our community. A record \$500 million in construction value of building permits was issued in 2005 and that record should be exceeded this year. New community growth has generated \$16 million in Development Cost Charges in the first three-quarters of 2006 which will be used to renew and expand our civic infrastructure. It has also allowed the City to secure \$5 million in infrastructure improvements through servicing agreements, including transportation improvements in City Centre and on Blundell Road, as well as infrastructure improvements in McLennan North and South areas.

Our business community plays a key role in building a balanced community through creating new jobs and economic activity, along with an expanded tax base. We are pleased to report that this year we have issued a record of over 12,500 business licenses.

We are blessed with a strong local economy. However, we must continue to work hard to retain and enhance our strong core of local business. To that end, Council established the new Richmond Economic Advisory Committee to advise us on our economic development initiatives.

Among our many efforts in this area, we have developed a new Film Strategy to foster more film activity in Richmond. We will continue to pursue a new Blundell Interchange to support the development of the critically important industrial lands in southeast Richmond, while we participate in discussions focussed on better coordination of regional development efforts. We are also developing specific Business Retention, Expansion and Attraction strategies, as we encourage our business sector to strengthen its ties to the Asia-Pacific region.

Improving through Innovation

Many of Richmond's new and improved services have come through innovations in technology and construction practices that allow us to work more efficiently and reduce costs.

The City has been a leader in using remote wireless technology to provide more constant monitoring of key infrastructure, while reducing the time required for manual inspection.

Our Information Technology department completed significant upgrades and improvements to systems including file storage, expense tracking, email, and payroll systems which will improve efficiency and accountability.

The City's records management system is essential not only to our day-to-day operations but to the important values of transparency and accountability in local government. Ten years ago, Richmond took the lead in introducing REDMS, an innovative records management system that remains the model for local government today. In 2006, a major new upgrade was completed to make that system even more effective and efficient.

The ever-expanding realm of telecommunication service has revolutionized our lives and will continue to do so. Richmond has launched development of a new Telecommunication Strategy designed to ensure that our City has access to the best and most cost-effective telecommunication services available.

Pursuit of Excellence

Our constant pursuit of excellence in every City endeavour is responsible for much of our success. This commitment to deliver the very best service possible to our community has been proven in the repeated recognition received by the City of Richmond. Over the past decade the city has received more than 70 provincial, national and international awards for leadership, innovation and excellence in service delivery.

Already the recipient of many awards for excellence in achieving energy efficiency, including being the only Certified Power Smart community in BC, Richmond received another Honourable Mention in the annual Power Smart Awards for ongoing achievement in energy management.

Our City website, the only three time winner of the Union of BC Municipalities Award for best local government website, was honoured again as an Official Honoree in the international Webby Awards competition, known as the "Online Oscars."

A core value of our City is our belief in people. A winner of numerous awards for our commitment to the professional development of our staff, the City was a finalist for the PRISM award for excellence and business achievement through the use of personal coaching.

Another core value is innovation. The City's continued commitment to use new and existing technology to improve efficiency and service delivery was recognized through the Hansen Power User Award, which honoured the City's innovative use of software to track more than \$250 million in annual expenditures.

And, for the third year in row, Richmond received a prestigious Financial Reporting Award from the Government Finance Officers Association, recognizing our outstanding annual report, produced entirely in house.

In addition to awards, there are many other ways to measure our success.

For instance, our commitment to health and wellness continues to put Richmond at the forefront of many major health indicators. We continue to lead the way for longevity in Canadian citizens with an average lifespan of 83.4 years.

The City has put a significant focus on reducing bureaucracy and red tape. Those efforts were recognized with Richmond being named as the most business friendly City in BC in a recent survey by Canadian Business magazine.

Indeed, our culture of excellence is recognized worldwide. In 2006 we hosted significant visits of local government officials and others from China, Japan, USA and South America – people wishing to observe and learn about Richmond’s best practises. Some of these delegations chose Richmond as their only Canadian stop in multinational fact finding missions, a remarkable honour for a City of our size.

Conclusion

It has been an incredible year. We are proud of the remarkable achievements of the past year and of the unceasing support of our community partners and volunteers.

We are comforted that we have a sound financial foundation and strong commitment to planning for the future which ensures we will continue to maintain our high quality of life and exceptional standard of service for our community.

We are resolved that we will not slip in our commitment to make Richmond a truly great community and confident that we are well on the way to fulfilling our corporate vision.

As Mayor, I am pleased to extend my personal thanks, as well as that of our entire City, to my colleagues on Council, our City staff, our volunteers, and the many community organizations and other partners who have worked side by side with us to make this a year to remember and a year to build upon for the future.

Thank you.