

Annual Address  
By Mayor Malcolm Brodie  
December 14, 2009

Tonight we reflect on an incredible year in Richmond's history. After a 50 year hiatus, we all celebrated the opening of the Canada Line, which reconnected rail service between Vancouver, the Airport and Richmond. Late in 2008, we also opened the Richmond Olympic Oval to international acclaim and welcomed the community to enjoy its offerings. City Council then continued to look far into the future when we approved our new City Centre Area Plan, began the renewal process for our Official Community Plan, and expanded our facilities to better serve the community.

Richmond City Council eagerly anticipates the year which lies ahead. It promises to be a year like no other. In mere weeks, Richmond will welcome the world when we play a central role in hosting the 2010 Olympic Winter Games. This once in-a-lifetime experience has already produced tremendous community legacies.

Yet, the Richmond Olympic Oval is only one component of our Games experience. The excitement will intensify on February 9th when the Olympic Torch Relay winds its way through our streets. That evening in Minoru Park, the community is invited to a spectacular cauldron-lighting ceremony, enhanced by exciting live entertainment and fireworks.

Each day of the Games, everyone is invited to Richmond's own celebration site – the O Zone. This will be a free, family-oriented festival offering something for every taste – from the fun and excitement of live performances on our Main Stage to Olympic simulcasts on the big screens – from ice sculptures like we saw at Winterfest to fascinating exhibitions from around the world – from Holland Heineken House to displays by other cities and regions of our Province – from roving entertainers to a Lunar New Year Celebration. Each Richmond resident can have an authentic and positive Olympic experience. Tribute must be paid to Tourism Richmond, our partner which contributed \$2 million toward the O Zone. This generous grant will provide long-term legacies for the City.

During the Games, Richmond will be alive with other spectacular sights and festivities. Watch for the Richmond Revealed program which creates a series of visual spectacles highlighting for the world special aspects of our industry and heritage. As a centrepiece, the Middle Arm of the Fraser River will feature millions of cranberries, Richmond's signature agricultural crop. These berries will depict the Olympic rings in an integrated expression of art and commerce.

Already in process is one of most important legacies of the Games. And this will come as no surprise, as you have often heard me speak of our incredible volunteers. Working closely with Volunteer Richmond, the City is organizing a huge group of dedicated volunteers who have already devoted thousands of hours of service at various community events. The success of the O Zone will be in the hands of these volunteers. Post-Games, they will be encouraged to continue their support.

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While preparations for the 2010 Olympic Winter Games have drawn much attention, your City has greatly enhanced its overall services. For instance, I will speak about the following:

1. Richmond Olympic Oval and the Canada Line;
2. Implementation of our Arts and Cultural Strategy;
3. Emerging as a Sport-Hosting Centre;
4. Strong commitment to community safety;
5. Our success in securing millions of dollars of external funding; and
6. Awards bestowed on Richmond.

## **1. OPENING OF RICHMOND OLYMPIC OVAL**

The opening of the Oval was celebrated just over one year ago. In the ensuing period, it has exceeded all expectations as a community sport, recreation, wellness and cultural facility. It has become a centre for high performance sport as well as an iconic architectural masterpiece dedicated to sustainable building practices.

Broadcasters call the Oval the "Crown Jewel", the "Signature Venue" and even the "Sexiest Venue" for the 2010 Olympic Winter Games. It has been enthusiastically embraced by our residents:

- Well over 250,000 people have visited while nearly 100,000 have skated on the long-track ice, including many thousands of Richmond students;
- The Oval played host to a broad mix of sports and community events in addition to speed skating, from table tennis to futsal to wheelchair basketball, and much more; and
- Dignitaries including Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Prince Albert of Monaco were among the many who visited. Their Majesties, the Emperor and Empress of Japan, were joined for their celebration by hundreds of distinguished guests from Richmond's vibrant Japanese-Canadian community.

## **OPENING OF CANADA LINE**

As one of British Columbia's largest infrastructure projects ever, the long-awaited Canada Line opened three months early. By rail, the journey between the heart of Richmond or the airport and downtown Vancouver now takes less than 25 minutes.

To better integrate the Canada Line into the City Centre, Richmond and our partners heavily invested to improve the No. 3 Road streetscape. Soon to be completed, the street will come to life with new bikeways, improved pedestrian access, public plazas, new bus malls, public art, enhanced landscaping and street furniture.

New development along the transit corridor will be further integrated to create a more liveable and walkable area. Sustainable residential and commercial growth will transform our City Centre. It will also help to establish Richmond internationally as a distinct city and a critical link in the Pacific Gateway.

## **2. ARTS AND CULTURE**

An ambitious series of new initiatives was launched in 2009, as Council implemented the City's Arts & Cultural Strategy.

Richmond's first annual Arts Awards were given out this past spring. The program attracted nominations among six categories to recognize both well-established institutions plus rising stars in our vibrant arts community.

The first annual Richmond Winter Festival of the Arts took place at a number of venues. Highlights include the first annual Children's Arts Festival and saw the ever-popular Winterfest Weekend successfully relocated to the Olympic Oval.

In October, Richmond was the site of the Xiamen Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra's first performance in North America. Xiamen has formally agreed to be our Friendship City in China, as has Qingdao. The Orchestra introduced Canadian audiences to the majesty of Chinese symphonic music conducted by one of China's most celebrated conductors, Zheng Xiaoying. Organized by our Sister City Committee, the performance reminded us of the many cultural benefits in having closer relationships with cities elsewhere in the world.

City Council also invested heavily in public art. For instance, we approved a series of artwork programs at the Oval under the auspices of the Vancouver 2010 Venues' Aboriginal Art Program. Created by an aboriginal artist, a contemporary structure of glass and cedar measuring over six metres tall and carved with First Nations' imagery, is one of the beautiful works of art now on site. Other projects include a traditional First Nations' welcoming artwork for the River Road entrance, as well as a custom Inuit tapestry which hangs inside. Soon, a mentorship program for a cross-cultural group of Richmond youth led by an aboriginal artist will be started.

Elsewhere, other interesting public art projects were unveiled this year:

- The Steveston Legacy statue, adjacent to the Gulf of Georgia Cannery is a life-size bronze sculpture of three cannery workers. Many partners contributed to this project.
- To remind us of the former racetrack, a life-size bronze statue of the racehorse Minoru, for which Minoru Park is named, was also unveiled. The statue was generously commissioned by the Milan and Maureen Ilich Foundation.
- Through the Cultural Biennale program, City Council approved the display of a number of public art installations created by artists from around the globe. The artworks will further enliven our urban landscape over the next year.

### **3. SPORT HOSTING**

The City advanced another important initiative by approving a preliminary Sport Hosting Strategy funded in conjunction with Tourism Richmond.

To establish itself as a significant destination, Richmond hosted a range of sporting events throughout 2009. Many championships were held at the Oval. They include the World and Canadian Single Distance Speed Skating Championships, as well as wheelchair basketball and rugby, badminton, table tennis and fencing.

Richmond also hosted the 2009 BC Seniors Games. This community-led initiative was a collaboration of various groups. 28 sports and 3 demonstration sports were guided by over 1,200 volunteers. These Games attracted almost 3,700 athletes, making this Richmond's largest sports event ever.

Our local sports groups played a key hosting role for many other events. For instance, we hosted the Boys National All-Star Soccer Championships. And the rocks were really rolling at

our Curling Centre as the Richmond Centre for Disability hosted the Second Annual International Wheelchair Curling Bonspiel.

All of these initiatives proved that Richmond's facilities, volunteer base, and community spirit are second to none. We will have real success with sport hosting.

#### **4. COMMUNITY SAFETY**

This year, City Council maintained its priority on community safety to ensure Richmond's enviable record of crime reduction is continued. Council approved funding for extra RCMP officers who will bolster the police presence around the new Canada Line. We repeatedly spoke out about the wisdom of early installation of fare gates on the Line and that has become part of Translink's plan.

To provide effective service for future generations, the City recently purchased a state-of-the art headquarters for our police detachment. The building, now used for Olympic security, should be ready for detachment occupancy in 2012. Council will ensure continuing police presence in the City Centre following the move.

Richmond Fire Rescue Department also continued its stellar record for meeting the needs of the community. New Fire Chief John McGowan, as well as Deputy Chiefs Tim Wilkinson and Jim Wishlove, were appointed. We are confident of their future success. Another successful recruitment was conducted, thus continuing to increase diversity in the workforce while maintaining high operational standards.

The City also continues with its plans for reconstruction and renovation of all the firehalls.

#### **OTHER MILESTONES**

Some of the many other recent service and infrastructure achievements are particularly worthy of note.

Richmond City Council recently endorsed the expansion of our Hamilton Community Centre upon receiving financial assistance from senior levels of government. This will triple its size and allow for a significant increase in the number of programs and services for a growing area.

The Britannia Shipyard celebrated the official opening of the Historic Zone in May. Each of the five buildings in this unique waterfront setting explore the history of Steveston society and community.

"Redefining Living on the Edge" is the name of a new Waterfront Strategy adopted by Council. It envisions that "Richmond will be a community that celebrates its rich past and recognizes the full potential of its island legacy – a dynamic, productive and sustainable world class waterfront".

Adjacent to the Middle Arm, the Hollybridge Promenade now features cherry trees, roadway lighting, decorative paving and seating. This project was partially funded through a generous donation by the David and Dorothy Lam Foundation.

Council also approved the innovative Steveston Village Conservation Program to preserve important building facades. For Steveston Village, it identifies many buildings for conservation based on their significant heritage value, as well as new design guidelines for the others.

## 5. ALTERNATIVE FUNDING

To reduce the local financial burden while adding to infrastructure, our City constantly seeks funding partners to support projects and programs. We were remarkably successful this year. Our successes include:

- The creation of the new Nelson Road-Highway 91 interchange to relieve the tremendous pressure from truck traffic on Westminster Highway. The City will fund less than 10% of the almost \$25 million total project cost thanks to contributions from other governments and partner agencies.
- Extension of Lansdowne Road from Gilbert to Hollybridge Way. The City received \$1.3 million from the federal and provincial governments for this project. It relieves congestion and provides a link to the Canada Line, City Centre and the Garden City Lands. It also showcased two pilot projects to promote sustainability – using underground heat to defrost the sidewalk as highlighted on CTV news and LED technology for the street lights.
- Canada, BC and the City approved joint investments for watermains, sewer improvements, and pump stations. Other projects are the upgrades to recover energy at Steveston and South Arm Community Centres through new solar panels. Senior government funding exceeds \$11 million for these important programs.

And there were many more partnerships – a unique, accessible playground on the Middle Arm – a new seniors' fitness circuit and accessible play area at Hugh Boyd Park – and more. These and many other significant grants amply demonstrate why Richmond should work closely with senior levels of government and our many other interested partners. The enormous positive impact on our community provides a cost-effective legacy for the future.

## 6. AWARDS

One benchmark to measure the City's record of excellence lies in the many awards received this year, including:

- The BC Recreation and Parks Association Environmental Leadership Award for Terra Nova Rural Park: This award recognized that the park is dedicated to agricultural heritage preservation, education and conservation. The UBCM also recognized the unique features of the Park by presenting the City with an award for Leadership & Innovation in Environmental Excellence.
- An initiative between the City and Vancouver Coastal Health won a Program Excellence Award for the innovative UBCM pilot program *Decreasing Barriers, Increasing Wellness*: This important set of seniors' outreach programs will return isolated seniors into City programs and services.
- Our Garden City Park Play Environment won a National Merit Award in the category of Design from the Canadian Society of Landscape Architects.
- For the sixth consecutive year, Richmond received the Canadian Award for Financial Reporting. Our award-winning 2007 Annual Report was designed, written, and economically produced exclusively by City staff.

Widely recognized as the most spectacular venue of the 2010 Olympic Winter Games, the Oval has received numerous awards.

Fast and Epp Structural Engineers received a Gold award in the prestigious Institution of Structural Engineers 2009 Awards, plus honourable mention in Sustainability. To win its Gold award, the Oval edged out prestigious competition, such as the Bird's Nest Stadium in Beijing.

Many other awards recognized the Oval's innovative architecture, use of wood, green building practices, steel design, sustainability and news worthiness.

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Looking ahead, let's focus on a number of ongoing key priorities, the foundation for which was provided this year. These include 5 areas:

1. Completing the Oval's post-Games conversion;
2. Updating our Official Community Plan;
3. Moving forward in social planning;
4. Richmond's approach to global economic challenges; and
5. Working to ensure Richmond remains a sustainable community.

### **1. RICHMOND OLYMPIC OVAL CONVERSION**

Once the Games conclude, the City will immediately finish the conversion to the Oval's long-term use. Council envisions a complete range of sports medicine and wellness services, a large fitness centre – triple its current size – and a multi-functional space to accommodate ice, track and court users. These will be augmented by the Oval's state-of-the-art indoor rowing tank, as well as studio space for group fitness, yoga and cycling. With its wide variety of programs and amenities, the Oval will offer something for all members of the community.

### **2. OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN**

Now underway is the update to Richmond's Official Community Plan. It is entitled "My Sustainable Community" and will guide our civic vision until 2041. A special focus will be on the pillars of community sustainability throughout that period. Key to the review will be extensive public consultation and input.

To assist the update, a number of major studies will examine special issues. For instance, we need to determine how we can meet greenhouse gas reduction targets. The City must also ensure it has a suitable inventory of employment lands, while we preserve our agricultural and residential areas.

The City Centre Area Plan, a key component of the revised OCP, has already been completed. The new Plan enables Council to manage job and resident growth in the City Centre over the next century.

### **3. SOCIAL PLANNING**

City Council has long struggled to assess the social services needed in order to maintain a liveable City. With uncertain and often-reduced support from senior levels of government, many groups strive to maintain current levels of service and cannot plan for the future. Clearly, many of these social services fall within the responsibility of senior levels of government. When this responsibility is not met, it falls to local government to work with various Richmond groups.

To that end, City Council has approved preparation of a civic 10-Year Social Planning Strategy. The objectives include:

- Identify social planning priorities for City attention between now and 2020;
- Clarify the role of the City and other stakeholders in addressing particular social planning topics; and
- Provide a foundation for a more coordinated and sustainable approach for further social planning.

#### **4. ECONOMY**

The world economy is still recovering from last year's meltdown. While general economic projections are better leading into 2010, the City has encountered many challenges.

City revenues have significantly dropped because of the economic and development activity downturn. Although we were able to cushion the impact this year, it is likely to impact our City's 2010 budget more dramatically. We will be challenged to maintain City services at current levels and provide for increases in our civic costs, while we minimize property tax increases. City Council will be vigilant in examining our costs as we seek efficiencies and alternative revenues.

The economic impetus provided by factors such as the Canada Line, the Olympics and the recently-announced Approved Destination Status Agreement with China, should all bolster our business sector in 2010. Council will always ensure that the City is well-positioned to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

#### **5. SUSTAINABILITY**

To ensure Richmond remains one of the world's most liveable cities, our Council has made sustainability a priority. For instance, a fundamental component of sustainability is the provision of affordable housing. Council always seeks ways to expand our affordable housing units. Though the City is prepared to support vital new projects, we need committed partners in senior government and elsewhere to move ahead.

An ongoing pressure for many of our residents is finding suitable child care. As with affordable housing, the expansion of child care is a key part of the development process. Through rezoning, many new child care spaces are expected.

Environmentally, Council has taken a number of steps to promote sustainability including:

- Adopting a new bylaw limiting cosmetic pesticide use;
- Expanding community gardens; and
- Further reducing our energy consumption.

#### **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, 2009 has been a memorable, award-winning year in Richmond. Though much of the current civic discussion revolves around the Canada Line, the Richmond Olympic Oval, and plans for the unforgettable 2010 Olympic Winter Games in February, those are simply the most visible aspects of Council's initiatives.

Our City has adopted a wide array of strategies to ensure that our quality of life improves, notwithstanding growth and other challenges. We always review our plans, sometimes looking out many decades to focus on components of a sustainable City. Richmond learns from past accomplishments and challenges as we plan for the future. We form mutually-beneficial partnerships to expand our range of facilities. City Council works with its community partners, dedicated staff, tireless volunteers, our strong business sector and residents to better provide a liveable City. All members of City Council and I, as your Mayor, feel privileged to play an active role in guiding Richmond into the coming years. Our future remains exciting, challenging and filled with opportunity for all those fortunate to have chosen Richmond as their place to live, work, play or learn.