

JORDAN BATEMAN SPEECH

Friday, Nov. 23, 2007

Thank you for coming.

We called this event ‘Building the Foundation.’ And that’s what we are doing here today. We are building a foundation for the future of the Township of Langley. We’re not just the sleepy little farming community we once were; while the beauty of our rural area remains intact, we are also a sophisticated urban community, centered along our western border. We have the foundation for something very special here.

I’m not going to speak long, but I want to share with you some thoughts on the Township of Langley—things we have been successful with, and things we are working to improve.

Langley is truly booming.

- Our industrial floorspace has grown by 20% over the past four years.
- Our commercial floorspace is up 13.5% in that same span.

And we need those jobs! Our population is booming too. Last year, we broke 100,000 people in the Township of Langley. Within 30 years, that number will be more like 175,000. It’s tremendous the growth that is occurring, and it’s thanks to several things:

- Good projects built by good developers. Look at some of the projects around Langley; they are gorgeous. Nature’s Landing by the Platinum folks. The award-winning Bedford Landing. BFW and MorningStar’s Yorkson Green homes. These quality developments are attracting young families and home buyers to put down roots in Langley.
- The community itself is another attractor. Groups like Dan Gosse’s North Langley Basketball Association draw families in. The amenities—the Walnut Grove pool, our commercial area, the future Langley Events Centre, schools, sports groups, service clubs, churches—they are all attracting people to the Langley way of life.
- Our investment in public safety is another huge draw. This term, Langley’s firefighters went full-time in two halls: Willoughby and Aldergrove. Our residents told us this was a priority they were willing to pay for, so we got it done. Next term, we will add more, including Walnut Grove on Jan. 1, 2009, on a motion I made last year. We have several firefighters here with us today. These guys are outstanding, and we’re lucky to have them in our community.
- Young business owners are sticking in Langley, deciding they want to build companies here. I look and see young realtors like Lacey Holcombe and Tyler Schacter, just starting out in the business, but choosing Langley as their base. My friends Scott Cave and Andrew Hawthorne are here from Rook Interactive, the Langley company that has created Red Velvet, an ecommerce platform tailored to the needs of the music industry. Their deal with the Nettwerk Music Group is huge, and another sign that Langley is a great place to start a business. They keep growing.

This growth does present challenges, especially when it comes to the infrastructure necessary to serve those residents. One of the first phone calls I received when I was elected to Council in 2005 was from an upset resident of Aldergrove. We had just had a major rainstorm, and the Aldergrove sewer system couldn't handle the infiltration of rain water. It had backed up, and this resident's basement had flooded. He was not happy.

It was a tough first call for a rookie Township Councillor. Making it even worse, the resident was none other than British Columbia's Minister of Housing, Rich Coleman!

So I did what any good municipal politician would do. "Well, Minister," I said carefully. "We do have a challenge serving the growth that has occurred in Aldergrove and Gloucester. We need to upgrade our sewer system to those folks, and that's going to cost us. A grant from the senior levels of government sure would help."

Two weeks ago, Minister Coleman was on hand to announce a \$6 million federal-provincial grant to help us revamp the Aldergrove sewer system. Mission accomplished!

Transportation is another huge issue. We need more of everything south of the Fraser. Rapid transit has not been extended south of the Fraser in almost 20 years, because of the domination of the Vancouver-Burnaby vote bloc. It's our turn now, and I know Councillor Hepner from Surrey, along with Mayor Watts, agrees.

We need to be bold or we will get nothing but total gridlock. We need the Gateway Project, and our residents know that. They asked me to support the twinning of the Port Mann Bridge as vigorously as I could. That's why I'm on the advisory board of a group called Get Moving BC. They support both road and transit improvements, as do I.

All of us have a role in this infrastructure challenge. Developers pay development costs charges, residents and businesses contribute property tax dollars, and senior levels of government contribute to specific projects. A Council's job is to bring all of these streams together, managing them as best we can by putting our pooled resources toward the priorities that will help the most.

The new Langley Events Centre a perfect template for this partnership model. A year ago, we announced a three-way partnership, \$15 million apiece, between the Provincial Government, Township of Langley, and a private partner, the Langley Development Group. The Township's share was funded out of Development Cost Charges, from money we had set aside for a Willoughby recreation centre. That rec centre will be built as part of this complex.

Last week, we announced several more partnerships, including Trinity Western University, the School District, Langley Gymnastics Foundation, and several others. A further Township investment of \$1.5 million generated an additional \$9.5 million in partnerships.

Think about that: we have leveraged \$16.5 million of Township dollars into a \$56 million project that will include a 3,000 seat ice arena, a 2,000 seat triple gymnasium, a 10,000 sq. ft. gymnastics centre, a community police office, retail and lease space, a fitness centre, a 500-seat banquet hall, a commercial kitchen, and more.

That's the power of partnership. But to continue to do things like this, we need a forward-thinking, positive Township Council that can debate issues vigorously, even disagree at times, but still work together.

I'm proud of a number of things our community has accomplished this term. The Event Centre, the fulltime firefighters, and growing our police force. Early in the term, I made a motion to strengthen our marijuana grow-op and crystal meth lab bylaws and clean up procedures. We now have a model bylaw for the region. I was very supportive of putting in place a public safety inspection team that shuts down the power of suspected grow-ops. This has disrupted more than 100 grow-ops in the past three months.

I am proud to support our regional airport, which has become a huge economic driver for the Township. Hundreds of skilled workers are there every day, contributing more than \$4 million to our local economy every year. And it's growing!

I could go on and on about the accomplishments of this term. It truly has been historic. We are getting a rail overpass for 64th Ave., we widened Fraser Highway, we restored public access to the Fort Langley waterfront for the first time in generations, we partnered with our tourism businesses to form Tourism Langley.

On my motion, we initiated an Aldergrove task force to look at ways to revitalize that struggling community. Council realized the value of the idea and the need for the plan, and I look forward to their report in January.

What next? We need to keep investing in transportation and infrastructure. We need to continue to aggressively expand our police, fire, and bylaw forces. We must continue and finish the work on long-term projects like the Events Centre and the Fort waterfront. We need to have a hard look at the amount of regulations we have in the Township and go through a process of clearing the outdated, obsolete ones out. We need to improve the way the Township communicates with its citizens, further embracing the Internet. We need to strengthen our neighbourhoods, like Murrayville, where the civic core has been dormant for too long. We need to continue our work in Willoughby, creating a livable and attractive community.

All of us who care deeply about this community need to work toward electing candidates who believe in a vision of economic prosperity, investment in public safety and infrastructure, and providing opportunities for our kids. I think this is the greatest town in British Columbia, and I couldn't imagine raising my family anywhere else. We're building the foundation for something special here, so let's keep working together to get it done. Thanks again for your support and for coming today.