

Speaking Notes
For Mayor Kevin Ashe



EVENT: APBOT – Mayors’ Address

TOPIC: Energy and Excitement

LOCATION: Ajax Convention Centre

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TIME: 8:00 am

Good morning friends, colleagues, and members of the board of trade. I am honoured to be here today and share with you a bold, dynamic, and exciting vision for our city.

And standing here in front of you, I can confidently say that through the collective energy and excitement in this room, we will make that vision a reality.

But, before I continue, I would like to acknowledge my Colleagues on Council who have joined us today:

- Regional Councillor, Ward 1, Maurice Brenner
- Regional Councillor, Ward 2, Linda Cook
- Regional Councillor, Ward 3, David Pickles
- City Councillor, Ward 1, Lisa Robinson
- City Councillor, Ward 2, Mara Nagy
- City Councillor, Ward 3, Shaheen Butt

While I and the Members of Council often get the credit for the great work that Pickering is doing, I would like to acknowledge our Chief Administrative Officer, Marisa Carpino, her senior management team, and all of the staff who have been working with many of you here today in helping to advance our key projects and initiatives.

Marisa, I invite you and City staff to stand and be recognized.

As a lifelong resident of Pickering, I have raised my family here and I want to raise my grandchildren here as well. I know firsthand how important it is to grow our city in a responsible way.

We need to make it prosperous, but also keep its unique sense of community in mind.

Prior to becoming mayor, I was a long-time councillor, and have had the privilege of working closely with many of you in the business community. I know that together, we can achieve great things for Pickering.

In no uncertain terms, I want to be known as the 'jobs mayor', as I feel that job creation is a reflection of our economic prosperity, and that it's integral towards the long term health of our community with respect to both the environment and quality of life.

And knowing what's in store for Pickering, job creation has to be our highest priority.

As you are all aware, we are in the midst of an unparalleled housing crisis in our nation, and increasing housing supply is but one critical first step towards addressing it.

For this reason, the Government of Ontario has mandated that Pickering, along with our GTA neighbours, will grow significantly and accelerate housing builds.

Ontario has a goal of building 1.5 million new homes within the next 10 years, and not only must Pickering accommodate its share, but we have been chosen to be one of the province's growth leaders.

The federal government plans to boost immigration levels from 465,000 people a year to 500,000 by 2025.

While these figures are nation-wide, you can expect upwards of 300,000 to settle in Ontario every year, with the vast majority staying in the GTA.

Knowing this, Premier Ford, Minister Clark, and Cabinet looked across the municipal landscape and chose Pickering to play a leading role in the future growth and success of our great province.

We have the location. We have the land. We have the vision. And we have the most opportunities.

By 2055, Pickering will be Durham Region's largest municipality with a population close to 300,000 people.

While I thank the Province for its confidence in Pickering, this recognition comes with a massive amount of responsibility, pressure, and indeed expectation.

While we acknowledge that growth is necessary, we're also concerned about perpetuating urban sprawl.

Sprawl can be described as car-dependent, soulless, bedroom communities. That is not what we envision for Pickering.

As such, the most effective way to combat sprawl is to bring jobs and economic development into the community. We want our residents to be able to live and work right here in our city.

I'm proud to tell you, that we're on the right track.

Since last year, we've added 500 new jobs to Pickering.

And just last month, we approved the draft plan for FGF Brands, which looks to build a phased manufacturing campus on 150 acres of land in our Innovation Corridor.

FGF Brands is the largest producer of fresh breads, rolls, croissants, fully baked muffins, and sweet goods, in North America, and has become a global leader by replacing low-tech equipment with robotics, integrated AI systems, machine learning, and supply chain innovations.

The first phase of this investment will consist of three manufacturing plants and a distribution centre with an overall gross floor area of over a million square feet, which will create approximately 2,000 direct manufacturing jobs.

Once full build-out is completed, the FGF food manufacturing campus will be one of, if not, the largest employer within the City with approximately 5,000 new jobs.

I'd like to ask Martin Ng, Senior Vice President of Construction and Lori Procher, Chief People Officer to stand and be recognized.

I would like to mention that at this time, the illustrious distinction of being Pickering's largest employer still belongs to OPG, which boasts 4,500 employees supporting the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station, which generates 14% of all the electricity produced in Ontario.

Previously, the plan was to see the eventual wind down and decommissioning of the Station later this decade.

However, last fall, the Ontario government asked OPG to continue to operate Pickering Units 5, 6, 7 and 8 through September 2026, while concurrently conducting a feasibility assessment on the potential for their refurbishment.

If the refurbishment is approved by the CNSC and proceeds, we could see the Station generating electricity for another 30 plus years.

Once again, the Government of Ontario has demonstrated its confidence in Pickering and will ensure that our city continues to play an integral role in the growth and competitiveness of our province.

I've mentioned it several times already, and I will mention again before I'm through here this morning, but it truly is an exciting time for our city.

Everywhere I go, I am constantly amazed and inspired by the energy and excitement that I see and hear from everyone I meet.

Speaking of exciting news, last month, I met with John Cappella, the President and CEO of Porsche Cars Canada, to discuss the planning and construction of the Porsche Experience Centre.

You may remember that this thrilling, interactive experience is the 10th of its kind in the world and one of just three locations in North America, with Pickering being the first 'urban' version of this amazing concept.

When I sat down with John in my office, we first spoke about conventional development issues such as road allowances, grading, parking, servicing, design, and construction materials.

However, as the meeting progressed, the conversation shifted away from the dry technical issues, to a deeper discussion about our shared values of pride, performance, resilience, and the pursuit of excellence.

There was a palpable energy in that room, and after the meeting, I felt invigorated and excited about the grand opening of the Porsche Experience Centre, which is slated for Spring 2024.

We're only a year away, and the timelines seem ambitious, but if their construction team is as fast as their cars, then I'm confident that we'll be open in time.

Unfortunately, John couldn't be here today, but in his place, I would like to recognize Annette Edel, Chief Financial Officer, Porsche Cars Canada, and Jennifer Cooper, Project Manager, Porsche Experience Centre.

Annette and Jennifer, can you please stand.

Let's give them a round of applause.

The potential of thousands of new visitors coming to Pickering is exciting for our local economy, especially for the casino and the Durham Live site.

Fortunately, for our out-of-town visitors, Pickering Casino Resort has recently opened its new 275-room hotel tower, which offers an array of different rooms and executive suites, along with a business centre, fitness centre, and pool.

Equally as exciting, the Arena, Pickering Casino Resort's 2,500 seat performance venue is now open.

In fact, it hosted its first special event on January 28th with an electric and exciting boxing card organized by United Boxing Promotions. This sold-out event brought the glitz and glam out to Pickering, and it truly had a Vegas vibe to it.

The evening was such an overwhelming success, that a follow up card has been organized for April 28th, which will be headlined once more by Ajax's own, Brandon "**Bad Boy**" Cook. I hope you all come out to cheer him on.

Before I continue, I just have to clarify, that no - Brandon is not related to Shaun "**Bad Boy**" Collier.

Thank you. I'm just having a little fun with my friend Shaun.

In all seriousness, I was going to use the "Bad Boy" reference to segue into another economic development announcement, but I'll have to get into that later, because there's still more to talk about in regards to the casino.

Although The Arena had its inaugural event in January, the official grand opening will be taking place on April 26th.

And if you haven't already heard, I'm excited to inform you that the headline performer will be one of Canada's most iconic musicians – the legendary Grammy and Juno-Award winning, Bryan Adams.

Imagine watching one of the world's biggest rock stars perform live right here in our city. There are only 2,500 seats, so it doesn't matter where you sit. All the seats will be great, and the site lines excellent.

And the fun doesn't stop there.

Seven months later, on Friday, November 17th, The Arena will be host to Durham Region's signature black-tie charity fundraiser. Of course, I'm referring to the Pickering Mayor's Gala.

Yes, after 18 years, the Mayor's Gala will be leaving the cozy confines of the Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex.

I was motivated to relocate the Gala to Pickering Casino Resort, because I wanted to take the fun and excitement up another level.

Rest assured that this new and reimagined Gala will still be Durham's biggest, best, and most fun party.

Let me tell you, the Mayor's Gala committee has been doing an outstanding job to date, and what they have planned will absolutely blow you away.

Durham Region has never seen anything like it before.

In a similar vein, I am proud to inform you that the City has fulfilled a pledge it made years ago to share its casino revenues with the Region of Durham.

Why? Because it's the right thing to do.

Once more, Pickering is demonstrating its leadership, because we're the first and only host municipality in Ontario to voluntarily share its gaming revenues with another municipality.

Investment attraction, economic development, job creation, and casino revenues shouldn't just benefit Pickering alone.

As such, we have made a commitment of giving the Region up to \$6M per year from our casino revenues.

We just ask that the monies be directed to Social Services – hopefully towards affordable housing, which we know is one of the most critical issues that we as a nation are facing.

Of course, our revenue sharing model is tied to the operational success of Pickering Casino Resort, and as such, I'm thrilled to tell you that our gaming tables are the most successful in the entire country.

Despite COVID-19, prolonged and intermittent pandemic lockdowns, supply chain issues, and labour challenges, it's amazing that Pickering has received over \$20M in casino revenues since Pickering Casino Resort opened in July of 2021.

The resounding success of the casino is a testament to the dedication, hard work, creativity, and agility of its management and staff.

Can I please ask Wayne Odegard, the General Manager of Pickering Casino Resort to stand, so that we can give him a round of applause.

At this time, I would be remiss not to acknowledge Steve Apostolopoulos, the Managing Partner of the Triple Group of Companies, and the Developer of Durham Live.

In addition to the casino, and Porsche Experience Centre, there are plans to build Restaurant Row, a boutique hotel, residential towers, and other key attractions and services.

Across the street, a compact TriBro Film Studios is currently operating, with the larger studio still in the works.

Upon full completion, it is expected to be one of the largest production spaces in Canada.

Coupled with our Filming Backlot, where the Jack Reacher Amazon series has returned for its second season, as well as the rural farm property where the Oscar-winning feature, Women Talking, was primarily filmed, Pickering will continue be a major player in Canada's film and television industry.

Can I please ask Steve Apostolopoulos to stand, so we can give him a round of applause.

Thank you Steve.

On a side note, Steve and his brothers are always looking to diversify their portfolio.

News just broke yesterday that they were looking to submit a bid for the Washington Commanders – one of the NFL's signature teams.

This sent shockwaves throughout the league as he will be competing against other high profile bidders for this \$5.6B franchise.

Clearly, he is a disruptor on both sides of the border, and I like to call him the 'Bad Boy' of commercial investment and development.

With that, I'm going to segue into the announcement that I had referenced earlier in my speech.

Last fall, Pickering Council was joined by Premier Ford, MPP Bethlenfalvy, Smart Centres, and one of the most famous Bad Boys in retail, Blayne Lastman, to break ground on a new, 233,000 square foot, multi-unit, industrial complex in our Innovation Corridor.

With SmartCentres as the developer, Lastman's Bad Boy, will be the lead tenant and take 130,000 square feet for its new, state-of-the-art, corporate head office, and distribution centre.

In addition to the construction related jobs and economic spin-off, the relocation of Lastman's Bad Boy head office and distribution centre will bring over 200 new jobs to our city.

With an estimated project value of \$70M, it looks like they will be open and operational in just about two weeks' time.

Kubota Canada, SmartCentres, FGF Brands, OPG, Trench Siemens, Porsche, Lastman's Bad Boy, Rogers Communications, Shandex Group, and Great Canadian Gaming. These are all big name companies that bring jobs, prestige, and economic strength to Pickering.

However, let's not forget that small and mid-sized businesses are the backbone of our city, and collectively, they play an essential role in driving economic growth and creating new and niche job opportunities.

At last year's Civic Awards, Lai and Associates received the City's Economic Development Award. We were thrilled to recognize this up-and-coming business - a Tier 1 Gold Microsoft Partner and Cloud Solutions Provider, that delivers information technology and multimedia services for various industries including Municipal, Regional, Medical, Manufacturing and Military clients.

I am exceptionally proud of their success, because they got their start right here in Pickering.

It was around seven years ago, that Basil Lai, a recent immigrant from Trinidad, walked into City Hall looking for some guidance on how to get started in business here.

Armed with our counsel and advice, he started off doing small jobs for a variety of municipal clients across Durham. He was then able to level up that experience into larger and more complex opportunities including working with the Region to create and execute a virtual Realtor and Developer Event.

Over the past few years, Lai and Associates were then able to build their portfolio of work, and parlay these experiences to secure contracts with the US Government and Military.

And just recently, they have been approved as a Treaty Trader Organization with the United States.

What started out as a husband and wife team, they now have 22 staff and just secured permanent offices at Pickering Parkway, where they look to expand their base and operations.

Well done! I'm just thrilled that Pickering has played a small part in their success.

Can I please ask Basil and Rhonda Lai to stand, so they can be recognized by the members of the Board of Trade.

On that note, I would like to take this opportunity to reinforce that the Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade remains one of the City of Pickering's most important partners.

By fostering a strong relationship and working together, we look to create a vibrant and sustainable business community that benefits both the local economy and our residents.

We stand together on many critical issues and I thank the Board of Trade once again for its advocacy and support.

Earlier this month, the Board of Trade wrote Pickering Council a letter on behalf of its members confirming their support of the Federal Government's strategic plan to prepare for a time when Pearson International will be at capacity, and that a new airport be developed along with plans for a multi-modal transportation hub.

The KPMG report states that Pearson will be at capacity by 2036, and the very public problems that the airport experienced last year made headlines around the world, which demonstrated to many that there is a very real need for a secondary airport in the GTA right now.

However, let's not fixate ourselves on passenger growth. Instead, let's plan for an airport in the context of industrial and commercial jobs – particularly in freight, logistics, R&D, and manufacturing.

There are so many companies and industries looking to be sited at an airport or close proximity to one. You can look at any airport in the world and see the commercial and industrial parks that have developed around it.

That's the opportunity that we have in Pickering, and that's what we need to protect.

It is our responsibility to attract as many jobs as possible for our residents now and into the future.

Before I conclude, I need to address one more vitally important matter.

As I had previously mentioned, the Province has deemed that Pickering will be Durham Region's most populous municipality and as such, we feel it has an obligation to locate a hospital in our municipality.

A new regional hospital in Pickering would not only address our current healthcare needs, but also build in capacity for our long-term growth when we reach close to 300,000 residents.

We will try our best to accommodate this massive growth, but we will never be a complete community without a hospital.

While there is a dispute as to where the hospital should be sited, it is the Government of Ontario that must ultimately greenlight and fund the project.

It is wholly within the Province's purview to take a comprehensive and macro overview of the entire situation, and consider all key factors such as growth projections, economic and business development opportunities, employment growth, infrastructure, site servicing, location, and cost controls.

For example, Seaton will see upwards of 35,000 new jobs, and employers such as Kubota Canada, FGF Brands, Lastman's Bad Boy will be responsible for the health and safety of thousands of employees, thus requiring direct access to hospitals and health care.

Finally, the lands for Pickering's hospital site are being donated for free by the northeast Pickering landowners. Just to be clear, northeast Pickering is not nor has ever been part of the Greenbelt.

With the completion of Envision Durham, the draft Regional Official Plan has confirmed that development is needed in this area to accommodate our growth projections.

As part of its bid, the City of Pickering assembled a world-class team of healthcare and environmental experts and we are ready and committed to delivering a world-class facility.

Additionally, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority confirmed in a letter to Lakeridge Health that Pickering's proposed

hospital site was outside of the potential enhanced natural heritage system illustrated in the Carruthers Creek Watershed Plan.

With respect to Whitby's proposed site, the Town doesn't even own those lands. Instead, it will have to negotiate and buy the lands from the Government of Ontario.

Based on 50 acres needed to build a hospital campus, we estimate these lands to be worth up to \$50M when fully serviced.

In this era of housing affordability, inflation, supply chain chaos, and spiraling cost of living, we urge the Government of Ontario to do the right thing and choose the site where the lands are being donated for free, because every dollar counts when it comes to building affordable homes or minimizing the impact on the taxpayer.

Ultimately, wherever the hospital is eventually sited, we can all agree that critical capital investment in new and existing Lakeridge Health facilities is desperately needed.

In closing, I'm just going to leave you with a couple of items.

Next week, Pickering Council will make a decision on the future of the City Centre project – with respect to the facilities we're going to invest in, where they're going to be located, and when they're going to be built in our downtown.

This transformational project will be essential towards community building, as Pickering has never had a real downtown for our community to live, work, learn, gather, shop, explore, and be inspired.

As I had mentioned before, we are trying to build a complete community, and we cannot have one without our own downtown.

And while I've made a few key announcements this morning, I have to let you know that we're also in active discussions with other major companies looking to be part of Pickering, our community, and indeed our future.

Friends, thank you very much for taking the time out of your busy schedules to be here this morning.

There's nothing I enjoy more than speaking about all of the new and exciting things coming to Pickering.

However, my words cannot adequately articulate the sense of energy and enthusiasm surrounding our city.

If you can indulge me for one last time, I ask that you turn your attention to the screen to watch a brief video, which can help you better visualize some of the energy and excitement that I had described today.

Video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ObJLKQ-qio>

Wasn't that awesome?!

Although I spoke at great length about the many exciting projects and developments coming our way, it just hits different seeing it come to life before our eyes.

I am so proud and excited, and I can't wait to return here next year to provide you with my annual update.

On behalf of my Colleagues on Council, and City staff, we hope we can call upon all of you to continue working towards our shared vision of a vibrant, prosperous, equitable, and sustainable city.

Thank you and God bless.