

Speaking Notes
For Mayor Kevin Ashe



EVENT: APBOT – Mayors’ Address

TOPIC: Stay Tuned

LOCATION: Deer Creek

DATE: March 21, 2024

TIME: 8:00 am

Good morning friends, colleagues, and members of the Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade.

Thank you for inviting me here today to update you on all of the new and exciting things taking place in the City of Pickering. As both residents and business leaders in the community, you have a vested interest in the work we are doing, so I thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedules to be here this morning.

Before I continue, I would like to introduce my Colleagues on Council who were able to join us.

- Regional Councillor Ward 3 David Pickles
- City Councillor Ward 3 Shaheen Butt

While Council and I are often credited for Pickering's achievements, I would like to recognize our Chief Administrative Officer, Marisa Carpino, and City staff who have collaborated with many of you here in advancing our shared priorities and initiatives.

Marisa, can I please ask you and staff to stand.

As well, I'd like to recognize today's event organizer and our long-time partner, the Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade:

- President, Leanne Paty
- Chair, Talia Lane
- Executive Director, Don Terry, and Board staff
- And a special shout out to Guedeji Djimi (G'day Jimmy), who was previously a member of our Corporate Communications Team

2023 was a whirlwind of experiences – exciting challenges conquered, unexpected opportunities embraced, and shared victories that cemented our collective vision for a vibrant, thriving Pickering.

To say, it's been a wild ride would be an understatement. However, I prefer a more strategic and measured approach to how we do business as a city and how we respond to the constantly shifting landscape.

For that reason, I am pleased to inform you that the City of Pickering has adopted its very first Corporate Strategic Plan, which will guide us over the next four years.

This plan is more than just a compilation of goals and objectives; it signifies our commitment to strategic governance, long-term planning, and the responsible stewardship of our city's resources.

I want to thank everyone here who participated in our community and stakeholder engagement. And we heard you loud and clear, as Economic Leadership and Innovation was identified as one of our strategic priorities.

I would be remiss not to mention that Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion is also one of the core elements of this plan.

In fact, staff will be presenting our EDI Strategy for Council review and consideration in the next month or two, which was developed over the course of two and a half years of extensive consultations.

I am pleased to invite all of you along on this journey. Together, we can build a community where all are respected, empowered, and feel a true sense of belonging.

And when I mention belonging, it's not always about people. It's also about places and institutions. Unique places that are a key part of our identity – and synonymous with Pickering.

If you haven't guessed yet, I'm talking about our vibrant and bustling Pickering Nuclear Generating Station.

On January 30th, Energy Minister, Todd Smith announced the Ontario Government's support of OPG's plan for the refurbishment of Pickering Nuclear "B" – units 5 to 8.

Once refurbished, Pickering will produce a total of 2,000 megawatts of electricity, equivalent to powering two million homes, helping to meet increasing demand and fueling the province's growth and electrification of our economy.

The Conference Board of Canada estimates that the project will increase Ontario's GDP by \$19.4 billion dollars over the 11-year period, creating about 11,000 jobs per year and supporting a growing labour force across this great province of ours.

This re-commitment to nuclear energy will help attract nuclear supply chain businesses to Pickering.

For example, AtkinsRealis, a key player in the nuclear technology sector, is expanding its operations from Mississauga and has recently opened a new 18,000 square foot, LEED-Gold office at 1340 Pickering Parkway, for 150 employees.

This expansion is not only a testament to their confidence in Pickering's future, but also a significant boost to our city's role in advancing nuclear technology.

With these announcements, we anticipate a growing influx of nuclear supply chain companies relocating to Pickering – and I hope some of them follow Atkins Realis' lead by choosing our downtown for their offices.

As you know, our downtown will be undergoing a dramatic transformation.

This urban renaissance is being led by CentreCourt's Pickering City Centre project – one of the largest and most ambitious mixed-use developments in all of Canada.

This major step forward in revitalizing our downtown is a 55-acre master-planned community, which will include 20 new mixed-use condominium developments with heights ranging from 9 to 55 storeys and consisting of approximately 12,000 new residential units.

And you know me – I'm especially pleased that there will be nearly 130,000 square feet of new office space in Phase 1.

I would be thrilled to have another industry player like Atkins Realis call our downtown home. It's the perfect spot for any company looking to relocate here.

On that note, we should remember that what makes this mixed use development so very unique is that it will be anchored by Pickering Town Centre – our community's 700,000 square foot shopping and entertainment destination, and gathering place.

The City Centre project has brought a new energy and buzz to the mall, where more retailers, brands, shops, and restaurants are vying to be part of this excitement.

For example, last month I cut the ribbon for JD Sports - a British Sports-Fashion Retail Company, which has developed a reputation for being the premier destination for all things sneakers, streetwear, and sports style.

In other words, I'm really not their demographic.

The key takeaway is that this project will see approximately 15,000+ new residents in our downtown.

If I'm a brand or retailer, I would jump at the chance to locate where there will be a captive market of thousands of people living right on mall property.

And you may not be aware, but the new owners and property managers of Pickering Town Centre, are CentreCourt, Salthill Capital, and Cowie Capital.

These partners have a bold new vision for the mall, and will look to reimagine the shopping, dining, and entertainment experience in both the short and long term.

I can't wait to see what they have in store for us.

In addition to the Centre Court project, we're seeing a significant amount of densification and building heights in and around our downtown as well as the Kingston Road Corridor.

On the other side of the 401, the Universal City project is dramatically transforming Pickering's skyline.

In total, there will be seven buildings at Universal City with the highest tower being 54 storeys! Upon completion, there will be approximately 2,851 residential units.

Just west of there, next to the Loblaws plaza, will be VuPoint Condos.

In total, this project will have over 1,700 units, with a portion being dedicated to affordable housing in conjunction with Habitat for Humanity.

While condos gets most of the headlines, I'm most proud that Pickering has a wealth of housing options that cater to every budget and lifestyle.

In addition to heights and densification, we have greenfield development in the Seaton community, which offers a range of low-rise housing options particularly attractive to young and growing families.

Of note, a significant number of 'missing middle' type of development projects are being built in Seaton and across Pickering, which play a crucial role in addressing the housing crisis by filling in the gap between traditional single-family homes and large-scale condo/apartment buildings.

Additionally, with the Province prioritizing accessory dwelling units, many Pickering homeowners have already applied to incorporate this type of gentle density in our established neighbourhoods.

Housing choice is great, but first and foremost though, we collectively need to do more to address the housing crisis.

And experts agree that the most meaningful action we can take is to accelerate and increase housing supply.

That's where the City can actually play an impactful role.

Since last year, we hired 10 new full-time staff in our City Development department to better manage the influx of development applications, while enhancing our ability to issue building permits, and conduct building inspections.

We also introduced a new online City Portal, which enables developers to apply for residential building permits electronically, instead of having to come into City Hall.

With all of the resources and measures we put in place, coupled with the overwhelming demand for new homes in Pickering, 2023, my friends, was a record breaking year for us.

In total, we issued 1,933 building permits, with an estimated construction value of \$853M.

In addition, we received 1,972 new development applications last year with a construction value pegged at \$1.26 billion dollars. That's 'Billion' with a 'B'.

These figures represent the highest number of both development applications received and building permits issued in a single calendar year for Pickering.

That's why it's no surprise that we exceeded the Ministry's housing target as set out in the Building Faster Fund - the only municipality in Durham Region to do so.

In 2023, we broke ground on 1,502 new housing units. As a result, I was honoured to host Premier Ford who stopped by my office last week and presented the City of Pickering with a \$5.2M cheque to reward us for exceeding our housing target by a whopping 58 per cent.

While Pickering is recognized as one of Ontario's growth leaders, it's important to emphasize that our vision and efforts extend beyond construction and land development.

Our overarching commitment is to plan for and build a complete community that not only thrives economically, but also prioritizes social infrastructure and amenities to enhance the quality of life for all residents.

Next week, we will be breaking ground on the Pickering Heritage and Community Centre – our first new community centre in decades, and our very first Net-Zero facility.

This wildly innovative project will bring the Museum, Library, and Community Centre into one dynamic facility, and will feature an Exhibit gallery, Program room, multi-purpose hall with a stage, artifact storage, the Library's local history collection, a gift shop and coffee bar, as well as outdoor program spaces with an art garden and patio.

You're all invited to the grand opening in 2026.

And in my very first Budget presented under the Strong Mayor Powers, I included the future Seaton Recreation Complex in the 2024 Capital Budget and Capital Forecast.

With an estimated project cost of \$242M, this will be the largest project in our city's history.

While we don't expect to break ground until Q1 of 2026, we will soon be launching our public engagement for this landmark project, so I encourage all of you take part, learn more, and have your say.

Social spaces, recreational facilities, public art, and green spaces all foster a sense of belonging and well-being.

These elements are integral to creating a vibrant and livable city where residents can live, work, and play in harmony.

And speaking of playing, has everyone been to Durham Live and Pickering Casino Resort lately?

The Casino retains its status as one of the highest performing gaming floors in all of Canada. Since it opened in 2021, Pickering has received over \$38M in hosting revenues.

Of note, Pickering remains the only gaming host municipality in all of Ontario to willingly share a portion of its revenues with another level of government.

Namely, we have already issued \$4.2M to the Region of Durham, and for 2024, we expect to exceed this amount, which will help fund social services, such as affordable housing and homelessness programs.

However, Pickering Casino Resort is more than just gaming and gaming revenues. The Arena at Pickering Casino Resort is fast becoming one of the east GTA's premier entertainment destinations.

Last year, we christened the Arena with a performance of the ages from rock icon Bryan Adams. Legendary singer-songwriter Jann Arden also had a concert where she performed some of my personal favourites.

And Filipino boy band, and Billboard chart-topper, SB19 whipped a raucous and sold out audience into a frenzy.

In addition to concerts, the Arena regularly hosts boxing cards, comedy shows, and musicals.

Outside, the Durham Live site is a busy hub of activity.

Last year, the Porsche Experience Centre broke ground, and I was on site recently and am very excited by the progress they have since made.

I could see the winding 2 kilometre track take shape, and the foundation and steel for the centre and exhibition space are now in place.

If testing a 400 hp Porsche is too extreme, then I have some exciting news about another new attraction coming to Durham Live.

While you may not be racing at 200 km/h, it will still be a fun, social, and dynamic night out with friends, family, and co-workers.

I'm thrilled to announce that Pickering will soon be home to the flagship location of Launchpad Golf.

This dynamic \$20 million facility promises not only a premier golfing experience, but also a vibrant social hub.

Imagine spacious outdoor suites equipped with electronically tracked golf balls, heated for year-round comfort, where you can tee off with friends or engage in some friendly competition.

There will also be a sports viewing lounge, boasting a capacity of over 600 people for events.

As Mayor, I couldn't be prouder to see world-class attractions like LaunchPad Golf and the Porsche Experience Centre right here in our city.

Speaking of world class, I would like to highlight the recent opening of the Jerry Coughlan Health & Wellness Centre. This state-of-the-art facility represents a significant milestone in our journey towards ensuring that essential social infrastructure is in place to meet the diverse needs of our residents.

This 4-storey, 67,000 square foot health care facility, developed through a partnership between Lakeridge Health and Northwest Healthcare Properties REIT, offers a comprehensive range of connected health-care services under one roof.

From a cutting-edge Surgical Centre to community-based mental health programs and primary care services, the Centre is designed to nurture a healthier community for generations to come – which is a fitting legacy for the late Jerry Coughlan.

As we celebrate the opening of this amazing facility, I am thrilled to share another milestone in our journey towards ensuring the well-being of our residents.

Last Friday, we broke ground for Pickering and Durham Region's next long-term care home, marking a significant step forward in addressing the evolving healthcare needs of our aging population.

This new facility, fast-tracked with additional funding support from Queen's Park, will offer 200 beds, providing comfort and care for our seniors and their families.

Under the Long-Term Care Home Capital Development Funding Policy, it will be eligible to receive close to half a billion dollars from the Ministry with respect to both construction and level of care funding over 30 years.

With the opening of the Jerry Coughlan Health & Wellness Centre and the construction of this new long-term care home, we are not only expanding access to vital healthcare services, but also creating a continuum of care that supports individuals at every stage of life.

When you look at all that Pickering has to offer, it's not a surprise that Pickering is receiving national recognition.

In a recent ranking by The Globe and Mail, Pickering emerged as one of the most livable cities in Canada, securing a Top-3 spot in all of Ontario.

This comprehensive evaluation covered 439 cities, in 10 categories, such as Economy, Housing, Health Care, Safety, Amenities, and Transportation.

In addition to being recognized as one of our nation's most livable cities, this same report ranked Pickering in the Top 10 in all of Canada for Entrepreneurs.

This achievement underscores our collective commitment to fostering a dynamic business environment.

Since last year's Address, the City has participated in close to 40 grand openings of small-to-mid sized businesses representing a broad and diverse cross section of industries including healthcare, finance, personal services, restaurants, grocery, retail, education, and real estate.

The sheer volume is incredible, because entrepreneurs and small business owners are the lifeblood of our municipality - contributing to its economic vibrancy and resilience, driving innovation, creating job opportunities, and enriching the overall fabric of our community.

I know many Board of Trade members are entrepreneurs and small business owners, so I want to acknowledge and thank you for choosing Pickering.

Let's give all our entrepreneurs a round of applause.

While we welcome all entrepreneurs of all backgrounds and industries with open arms, we're especially interested in attracting hi-tech entrepreneurs and SMB's to our city - not just to boost the local economy, but to cultivate a fertile ground for creativity, innovation, and growth.

Last year, we organized and hosted Tech Connect, Durham Region's inaugural high-tech conference at Pickering Casino Resort.

This event shone a spotlight on our growing tech sector, and brought together industry leaders, investors, and influencers, while creating invaluable opportunities for networking, knowledge exchange, and collaboration for all who attended.

We look forward to making it bigger and better next year.

Speaking of bigger and better, we put together another video this year that captures much of what I was speaking to today.

Unfortunately, we had to trim the video, because there are just too many amazing projects and happenings taking place in our city.

I know. It's a good problem to have.

Wasn't that a great video!

I can't help but feel immensely proud of all that we have accomplished over the past year, and all the excitement that is taking place in the community.

Apologies for the ending though.

Stay Tuned.

I hate leaving things like that.

It sounds so promising, but is ultimately unsatisfying.

....kind of like drinking low carb beer.

Stay tuned.

We'll get back to you.

Coming soon.

There is so much going on in Pickering, and we are attracting so much interest from so many different companies, industries, stakeholders, and partners, but we need to be patient.

So, once again - stay tuned for more details, because bigger and bolder announcements are on the horizon, waiting to unfold like chapters in an exciting book that you don't want to put down.

We're just getting started on our journey toward a brighter future for Pickering, where innovation, opportunity, and community spirit converge.

It's a time of boundless potential and endless possibilities, and together, we have the power to shape the narrative of our vibrant city.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to our shared vision.

Thank you for inviting me to speak today, and God bless.