

**Notes for remarks by  
Mayor Maja Tait  
Inauguration Address  
November 7, 2022**



*Mayor Maja Tait*

Good evening, everyone. Welcome to the inaugural meeting of the 8<sup>th</sup> term (2022-2026) of the District of Sooke Council. Thank you for joining us tonight.

I am extremely grateful and humbled to be serving a third term as your Mayor.

It is an honour to continue this work on the traditional territory of the T'Sou-ke and Scia'new Nations. While we were unable to hear from Chief Planes and another Elder, I wish to acknowledge their presence and thank the T'Sou-ke and Scia'new for their stewardship of the lands. On behalf of all of us, I certainly look forward to continuing our work together.

As we begin this evening, I do wish to acknowledge other dignitaries in attendance tonight.

I'm delighted to welcome our newest SD62 School Board Trustee, Ebony Logins.

I wish to also acknowledge another elected official who has served previously and that is Councillor Herb Haldane.

Your honour – Justice Gough, thank you for your service this evening and for being with us.

I wish to also thank my family for their tireless support. To my campaign team and volunteers who dedicated so much of their time to all the campaigns with this election; thank you to your families, friends and supporters.

This year, Sooke saw its highest levels of candidate participation and I would like to acknowledge the contributions that every candidate made to our local democracy and thank all voters who participated in the 2022 local government election.

I would like to thank and acknowledge, again, our outgoing Council member, Ebony Logins. I wish you all the best and congratulations to you on your successful election as a School Trustee. I look forward to working with you, alongside Council and all School District 62 Trustees including Milne's landing representatives Amanda Dowhy and Alison Watson, for the betterment of families and children in Sooke.

Many thanks to our Juan de Fuca neighbour Mike Hicks for his service. I would like to congratulate and welcome to Al Wickheim. We look forward to serving along side you.

I would like to congratulate the six members of Council on your successful elections: Councillors Jeff Bateman, Al Beddows, Dana Lajeunesse, Megan McMath, Kevin Pearson and Tony St-Pierre.

Welcome back.

Please note that Councillors McMath and Pearson are away on planned vacation, they have already been affirmed into office by our Corporate Officer.

Together, we carry immense responsibility to lead our community through difficult times.

To listen to residents' concerns and ideas.

To serve as the voices of the community through the decisions we make within the District and our advocacy alongside regional partners and to other levels of government.

Through respectful discourse, our varying perspectives will help ensure the representation of all members of our community and inform thoughtful decision-making in the best to all those we serve.

We are also grateful to have with us – our excellent District staff: remarkable professionals and members of our team who are dedicated in their service to the citizens of our community. Thank you, everyone.

There is so much that goes into municipal operations from the commitment of our first responders to staff's work on grant writing to road design and build-out to streetlights to underground services to trail maintenance and development to building permits to the technology available for those viewing tonight's meeting at home... just to name a few.

While I acknowledge our staff, our hearts and well wishes are with CAO Norm McInnis and his family as he continues his health journey. Know that you are on our minds and in our hearts.

I wish to also acknowledge Interim CAO Don Schaffer. CAO Schaffer, thank you for being with us and for your timely support and assistance.

This is an exciting time in our community as we get to work.

We realize that we have some unfinished business from the last term:

Such includes finalizing the review and adopting a new Official Community Plan. One that will serve us well into the future.

Continuing to advance the Transportation and the Parks and Trails Master Plans. The implementation of these plans will ultimately make getting around Sooke safer and more efficient - whether using four wheels or two, walking or rolling.

The Sooke 2030 Climate Action Plan provides a host of solutions to meet our emission reduction targets while exploring ideas to save residents time and money.

And the Community Economic Development Strategy leads our work towards a diverse local economy to foster and grow local opportunities.

These interconnected pieces provide a path forward for our community and one that with careful financial planning will help us realize the shared vision we all have for our community.

In the last term, we advanced many initiatives.

We hit many milestones, like the opening of a new library and the sports box.

We started many projects.

And, we were also hit with a global pandemic, a health care crisis, a climate crisis with wildfires, atmospheric rivers and heat domes. There was a severe impact on mental health from a poisoned drug supply, affordability, a housing crisis... one state of emergency after another it seemed.

And through all of this we continued to be one of BC's fastest growing municipalities.

We continue to welcome new residents.

Yet, through all of this Council stood strongly together, looked out for one another and when they said "we have each other's back" - we meant it. I am so grateful to all of you.

We will get to work on our orientation and strategic planning later this year and early into next. This is a great time for us all to reflect on what works well, what doesn't so much and how we can make improvements.

I expect our staff to provide solid updates on where we are and to provide us with valuable feedback on what they are encountering in their lines of work.

We have also advanced many projects and plans, adopted many policies and bylaw; however, through all of this we may have inadvertently created "red tape." Some delays and unnecessary tasks or steps perhaps. Council recognizes this, so we will take the necessary steps to address this.

We will get to work with some new project teams or task forces. I've asked, or rather insisted, other councillors attend and join with me with this hard work on these projects.

This work is immediate and underway:

Advocacy. This a good time for us for us to strike and follow up on what we advocated for at UBCM. While all the other Councils are getting to know one another, we can get to work.

We know where we are at.

Advancing health care. We have Island Health coming to Sooke in December and we have some great plans that are really getting close to the finish line.

Land use planning.

Community safety.

And, some public art projects.

We're thinking of you, Brenda.

I have reached out to all members of Council and, as noted, they have willingly signed up so this work has started. We will report out at upcoming Committee of the Whole and Regular Council meetings.

So, as we get to know – know that I have new expectations for this term.

We, as your elected Council, are entrusted to govern.

We are looking for thoughtful, judicious, spirited and respectful discourse that weighs all relevant interests. As always, heckling, bullying and demeaning comments have no place here and will not be tolerated.

Let's instead tolerate one another's imperfections and build capacity around our strengths together.

We recognize that local government has its role, as do other community and not for profits and the private sector.

We view you all as community partners and stakeholders.

There is no 'us and them'. Only we.

Together.

There is the "pandemic or some other crisis". And to meet the unknowns of tomorrow, we need to stand together and support one another in the various roles we all have.

We are one Team with a shared vision of shared prosperity. And, when I say team, it's: Together Everyone Achieves More.

You see here, in Chambers we have two empty chairs.

These have been placed here deliberately to symbolize those with no voices – the environment (the natural places that are home to the finned, feathered, four legged and furry).

The other is for our unborn children – the future generations.

Let's always be mindful in our decisions of whom is in Chambers with us and whom cannot be here and how our decision impact all of them together.

Let's continue to have the spirited, tough conversations that we need to and work together to ensure everyone has access to the information they need to be informed.

On our voter turnout, it fell from about 42% to 28% and in some ways I feel "apathy was our friend." So, while that does seem a bit negative, it shows we have some work to do.

Municipal Matters Most (as Councillor St. Pierre said). If that's the case where was everyone?

As Mayor, I hereby proclaim that from this day forward, all Mondays remaining in this term of office be locally known as "Municipal Monday".

All scheduled council and committee of the whole will happen on Mondays.

We will look for coffee chats with the Mayor, open houses, town halls, formal and informal meetings. And when you don't come to us... we're going to find ways to come to you!

I'm continuing the work with "Local Government School." This is a program we launched within our local school and with our teachers. Together, we can we empower the next generation so they are ready to take on the reins of leadership as they come of age.

Finally, I am aware that systemic racism persists in our community. I'm hearing about this from our children as well as parents. This is unacceptable. I'm asking all of you to stand with me.

Be Brave.

Have courage – call it out when it happens. As these either deliberate or off hand comments eat away at one's self esteem.

We need our children to be strong, resilient and confident to take on the challenges that we know lie ahead.

We all need to recognize that the world is not "black and white." Rather, it is one that celebrates all colours of the rainbow. And truly, all have a place within our Sooke.

We all belong and certainly that is what has made this community welcoming. Unique. Friendly. And maybe a little bit weird sometimes.

Let's realize the potential in all of us.

Stand strong and confident together.

This will be a busy term, with focused work and effort and I am thrilled and so very grateful to be a part of this.

We have excellent individuals and organizations in place to write this next chapter in Sooke's history.

One that will see us celebrate our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary since incorporation and one that I hope will yield a similar testament as Councillor Bateman expressed in his blog at the end of the last term. He shared that we conducted:

*“Serious business but never short of laughs, compassion, goodwill and an eagerness on all our parts to be of community service.”*

Thank you all for your attention and your time with us this evening. To our residents, thank you for putting your trust in us.