

My friends, hello.

I am excited to speak about the state of our city. First, I want to acknowledge the land on which we meet.

This is Treaty 6 Territory—the traditional gathering place and meeting ground of the Cree, Blackfoot, Nakota Sioux, Iroquois, Dene, Ojibway/Saulteaux/Anishinaabe, and many others.

This is also the Metis homeland and home to one of the largest Inuit communities south of the 60th parallel.

This land acknowledgement comes with a deep personal gratitude and a commitment to reconciliation.

I came to this city 41 years ago.

Stepping off the plane in the middle of November I thought that this is the coldest I will ever be in my life.

I thought the same thing ... every day ... for the next few months.

Despite those cold days, the warmth and support I received from this community—on this land—unlocked my potential. It propelled me to this position where I have the honour of serving you as mayor. For that, I am forever grateful.

I am honoured to have some of our partners in reconciliation with us today. Thank you to Chief Billy Morin for joining us at my table.

I also want to thank my wife, Sarbjeet, and our daughter Seerat for their support and love. They are my biggest champions and without them, I would not be standing here today as your mayor.

When I served as councillor, I looked forward to the State of the City.

Like you today, I would sit and watch the mayor, and like you, I would look for inspiration.

For hope. Confidence.

Because as much as this is about the city today, it is also an opportunity to talk about the city we can become.

To do that, we need to talk about where we have been.

Friends, I'm so happy you are here.

After some of the most painful, challenging times in our history—amidst loneliness, uncertainty, and fear, just being here is a win. It is the result of love for yourselves, love for each other, and our home, Edmonton.

This is who we have always been. The Edmonton that—when faced with challenges—takes what it has learned, and gets to work.

The achievements and goals I'm about to share with you are the product of the collaborative spirit of your City Council. (Councillors Jo-Anne Wright, Andrew Knack, Karen Principe, Anne Stevenson, Aaron Paquette, Keren Tang, Sarah Hamilton, Erin Rutherford, Ashley Salvador, Tim Cartmell, Jennifer Rice and Michael Janz, thank you for your commitment and dedication to Edmonton. (Please, give them a round of applause) and I am so lucky to work with you all.

Friends, we have an opportunity to re-imagine the city we can be, and build an Edmonton for all of us.

We are a city of city builders and I am confident that together, we can build an economy and Edmonton where no one is left behind.

While I love Edmonton and this community has lifted me up, we are not a perfect city.

This pandemic has revealed that we are also a city of systemic inequalities.

Indigenous communities, Black and Muslim women and members of other racialized communities, people from the 2SLGBTQ+ communities continue to experience hate, stigma and racism in our city.

We are a city of a record number of houseless people—*doubling* since 2019.

Businesses—particularly those in downtown, Chinatown and other business districts—are still struggling to make ends meet.

We have all lost loved ones—family members, friends and coworkers—to this pandemic.

As it raged on, this past year was our deadliest for drug poisoning deaths.

And climate change is only increasing in intensity.

So, with *all* that, with so many unseemingly daunting challenges, how do I still believe we can build an Edmonton—let alone an economy—for all of us?

Because these hardships will only define us if we let them. If we do nothing.

But as you all know, we ARE NOT a “do nothing” city. We are a city of humble but determined people.

My first six months as your mayor have been both beautiful and challenging. Your city council has shown up as promised.

Together, we have approved a number of infrastructure projects that will make your life better while creating 4000 well-paying middle class jobs.

Because of our city administration’s hard work implementing the economic action plan, private sector investments like Station Lands, the Park, and others are bringing more housing units into our downtown.

And our city is now ranked second best in the country for permits, licensing and project approval timelines.

Some of the biggest logistics companies in the world are looking at Edmonton to invest but our industrial vacancy is at a five-year low, and rental rates are increasing.

During the budget process, we will be making strategic investments to grow our industrial tax base creating more “ready to go” opportunities for investors.

Edmonton is on its way to becoming a business friendly city where doing business is easy, convenient and affordable.

We are breaking down the barriers for underrepresented businesses through a series of programs and grants that will help them succeed.

The Edmonton Chamber of Commerce’s Trade Accelerator Program is helping small and medium-sized businesses reach global markets sooner.

At the same time, Innovate Edmonton is positioning our city as a global innovation capital.

Explore Edmonton is working hard in promoting Edmonton as a destination for national and international tourism.

We all know that global capital can be invested anywhere. But people are choosing Edmonton. Air Products’ \$1.3B investment in hydrogen, HCL Technologies choosing Edmonton for its western Canada expansion are just a few examples.

And alongside our regional partners at EMRB, Edmonton Global is actively attracting investment to help us build a stronger metropolitan region.

Our world class public services, delivered by dedicated and committed city staff, are building peoples' ability to participate in the economy and the community.

Edmonton is poised to be a global city region.

And what we do next has the power to shape our future. But for all of us to flourish, we need systemic, foundational changes.

Edmonton is a young and growing city. Talent is more than available. But in order to unlock the potential of that talent and keep that talent here, we need to build a city where everyone feels a sense of belonging, safety and community.

Ending racism, discrimination and hatred is integral for our economic growth.

And I want you to know that your city council and city Administration are taking tangible actions to address these issues that are holding many Edmontonians back.

In order to build an Edmonton and economy for all of us, we also need to accept our truths, however ugly they might be.

We need to heal the wounds of our colonial past and words are no longer enough.

That is why your city council has directed city Administration to fast track a plan to respond to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls calls to action and to advance our work to implement the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

It is beyond time. But it won't be easy and no one can do it alone. Everyone, including all of us in this room, must walk on the path to reconciliation with Indigenous communities.

A successful economy for all also considers how essential arts and culture are for our connection and social wellbeing.

When companies look to invest, they look for a thriving arts and culture scene, and Edmonton has so much to offer.

Our world renowned International Jazz Festival, Edmonton Folk Festival and Fringe Festival are coming back this summer! So let's show off that we are a city of creative people—a festival city. A city with an amazing and diverse arts scene.

A successful economy for all includes all of us.

Women were disproportionately affected by the pandemic, reducing labour force participation rate to its lowest in 30 years. That must change. That is why we are looking into how we can develop a child care strategy that makes getting back to work easier.

When we think of a successful economy for all, we also think of housing.

Housing is a basic dignity that everyone deserves.

To heal as a city, we need our city's people to have homes where they can heal, and access wrapped around services to overcome trauma, mental health and addictions, and get training and education for themselves and for their children.

So here is what we are doing.

Our city, in partnership with the federal government, is developing 2,500 units of affordable housing, including 600 units of permanent supportive housing.

But we can't do this alone.

We need our provincial government to step up because tackling houselessness, mental health, addictions and trauma is their responsibility.

They need to show up for our most vulnerable.

People's human dignity and our economic recovery depends on it.

When it comes to our relationship with the province, there are a few other inequities that I want to highlight.

But before I do that, I want to acknowledge Minister McIver and Minister Fir for attending today and showing your support. I also want to thank Minister Sawhney and MLA Searle Turton for their support on FIFA and public transit. I also want to thank our other regional MLAs, both from the UCP and NDP, for being our allies. For me, this is not about partisanship, but here are some hard facts.

From 2007 to 2021, Edmonton has received \$1.1B less compared to Calgary under the MSI and Basic Municipal Transportation funding.

In the last provincial budget, the Edmonton area received only one-third of the infrastructure investments compared to what our neighbour to the south received. ONE THIRD.

Edmonton is a regional hub for social services. We carry a disproportionate burden providing servicing to Alberta's most vulnerable for which we receive no recognition or financial support.

Every year, Edmonton loses \$14M in tax revenue because our provincial government is not paying its fair share of property taxes on the buildings they occupy.

In the past 3 years, our world-renowned University of Alberta has faced the largest budget cuts of any post-secondary in the province. Now totaling \$222 million, stifling innovation and hurting students.

These are just a few examples. Too often we are made to feel that Edmonton does not matter to the province. If you feel that way, I am there with you.

To dig deep into these inequities, I will be convening a symposium of community leaders to find ways to end these challenges and explore how provincial economic development and tourism agencies can increase their presence in Edmonton, helping us grow our economy. Without our province being on our side, we will not succeed.

And I call upon all of you to support your city council in this effort to build a stronger relationship with our provincial government. .

And to our provincial government. Edmonton deserves a fair deal. Work with us. We are your capital city. We make outsized contributions. Please stop holding Edmonton's economy back.

Friends, Edmonton is preparing to become a city of two million people. We are building a transportation system that is sustainable and efficient to accommodate that growth.

We are investing in public transit, cycling and shared use infrastructure. With an integrated transportation network, you will have convenient, affordable and equitable options to move through the city.

How you move is up to you. But we're going to make it easier on you and our environment.

Speaking about the environment, the Prairies are the fastest warming region in Canada outside of the Arctic.

We are at risk.

Climate change is bad for business and investments. It is bad for our well-being.

So let's make changes now instead of paying billions later because of damages to infrastructure, property, investments and our health.

For the City, we will continue to look at land use planning and zoning to build more dense and sustainable communities.

Included in the City Plan, we have a vision for 15-minute communities where you can live and work all within a reasonable distance, relying less on vehicles.

We are also making it easier for Edmontonians to act on climate change through rebates, home energy labelling and our Clean Energy Improvement Program.

And one more thing.

As global markets and economies shift to reduce emissions, the Edmonton Metropolitan Region is poised to be a world leader in renewable energy in solar, geothermal and particularly in hydrogen.

In fact, Edmonton region just came together to host the first Canadian Hydrogen Conference, attracting brilliant minds and potential investment from all over the world highlighting the collaboration of regional municipalities. And I want to thank my regional elected official colleagues for joining us today. We all know that when Edmonton thrives, our entire region thrives. When our region thrives, Edmonton thrives.

My friends, our future is bright.

We will build an Edmonton for all of us.

We will build an environment for all of us

And, we will build an economy for all of us.

One that grows with increased sustainability and stability.
Our city—and its economy—should have room for all of us.
Anything less is unacceptable.

I believe in the city we can become because of the city we
choose to be today.

And just so we're clear, I also believe the Oilers are going to
bring home the cup. What. A. Team.

When I landed here 41 years ago, I never imagined that life
would take me where I am today.

But Edmonton is a city of possibilities. When we work
together, when we support each other and lift each other up,
we make impossible possible.

We are a humble and kind city, but we are also a determined
city. And you have elected a determined mayor and city
council.

And this is our moment.

Let's face our challenges the Edmonton way.

Take what we have learned, lift each other up, and get to work.

Thank you.