



**2018 State of the City
Of North Tonawanda**

Delivered by Mayor Arthur G. Pappas

February 6, 2018

My fellow citizens, members of the Common council, City employees, members of the press and guests, I come before you to report on the state of this great City of North Tonawanda. It is an honor to having been elected in November to serve as Mayor for the next four years. Your confidence in me is humbling and I truly appreciate the support I have received. To begin, I believe North Tonawanda is going in a very positive direction with the assistance of the Common Council, LCDC, and the great work of all City employees and the participation of our residents.

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My goal as Mayor is to bring harmony to concerns and challenges that our City faces. Our City continues to grow economically, financially, and culturally to make this community a welcome place for visitors and new residents.

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During my past year in office many changes have taken place and there are many more projects in the works all the while keeping taxes down to a zero % increase while other surrounding municipalities have raised taxes substantially. With the hiring of the new City Accountant changes are taking place with new software, the hiring of grant writers, and more efficiencies are being put in place.

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North Tonawanda was awarded over \$4,000,000 in grants in 2017. Most significant was the 2.5 Million Smart Growth Fund announced by Governor Cuomo at the Remington Lofts in October which will greatly enhance our downtown area. Along with that, \$50,000 grants have been received to upgrade our well populated City Market to improve amenities, enhance safety, green space, aesthetics, parking and the existing facilities. The city has been examining potential updates to codes that regulate the Market. The Erie Canal Gateway Harbor has grants applied for and received by the City Engineer included Main Street Green Infrastructure Improvements (GIGP) and Gateway Park and Sweeney Canal Wall Dock Improvement. Grants have been secured for the Erie Canal Gateway harbor with new lighting, power upgrades, restroom updates and more will enhance the area for boaters and residents during our summer months.

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New businesses have entered our City with the completion of Ivy Lea Construction, Pulp 716, Canal Side Wine and Spirits, Webster's Kitchen, Ascension Antique Arts and Artisan Market, and the Primary Care facility on Kinkead Street. New businesses are being negotiated for various parts of the City to occupy vacant buildings such as the Multi-use Micro Enterprise to be located on Main Street. Zombie properties are being addressed as the zoning codes have been updated with new tools available to combat this problem. Ground breakings have been held for the new 102 unit residential buildings on the Little River including a multiuse venue. The new facility at DeGraff Hospital will provide state of the art access care for residents in need. The property at 621 Payne Avenue has been rezoned so the Construction Company Savarino will be able to begin construction for senior housing. There has been approved a transfer of land of 795 Walck Road, a 1.4 acre of land to NKM Development in exchange for a 2.43 acre parcel at 680 Erie Avenue which provides useful property for the DPW. Community Development completed a housing rehabilitation program which helped to improve the housing safety and quality for 16 low income home owners. The City and Lumber City Development have actively partnered with the Oliver Street Merchants Association to support Oliver Street redevelopment. This included the completion of an Oliver Street Needs Assessment and Action Plan in 2017.

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Deerwood Golf Course had maintenance done this past year with repairs to numerous water leaks in the irrigation system, satellites repaired, additional sod and seeding of areas, aerated and top dressed greens, Doe 8 Repair, and golf cart path work. The Botanical Gardens along the Canal have been cleaned and much has been done to improve the area for weddings and other events. This was accomplished by the Parks and Recreation Department and many volunteers from the community.

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Moving forward, our City's infrastructure will continue to be a priority as well as the conditions of our roads. 1.2 million dollars was available this year for road improvement and over 10 miles of roads were milled and paved in 2017. The DPW will continue to work diligently with the help of the new milling machine/Asphalt Zipper which was purchased last year and has tremendously aided with road repair. This will allow us to jump start road repairs before the actual paving season begins. The Common Council has budgeted for a new paver for 2018. This will enable us to pave more roads with better technology built into the machine. Much has

been accomplished, but there still is a long way to go with our roads. A new design for the intersection of Payne and Meadow is continuing to be studied and if enacted will alleviate confusion for drivers. Other projects started and completed in 2017 are: East Oliver water main replacement, Oliver Street emergency water line replacement, City Hall pointing phase one, City Hall entrance stairs, City Hall skylight replacement, and Waste Water Treatment Plant Capital Improvement Plan. Maintenance of our Water/Waste Water facility is crucial and work has been done to improve this vital facility. Renovation of a 4 million gallon storage tank is to begin this year and a full cleaning of the intake lines to provide better efficiency. Also, new sand filter backwash pumps were installed and the Bar Screens were replaced for incoming storm water. Electrical systems and the installation of a new backup generator costing 1.4 million dollars will be completed in one phase by the end of 2018.

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Striving to provide a quality of life for citizens young and old, a new Youth Center has opened at the Hope Center on the newly dedicated Hope's Way and already has shown a tremendous growth in attendance from the previous location. The Senior Center continues to provide information, education, nutrition, trips, and special events for the older population. Culturally, we have celebrated the 90th Anniversary of the Riviera Theater with record numbers of people now discovering our historic jewel. The City owned Carnegie Arts Center continues renovations and has expanded activities with Art shows and musical performances and will continue to add to their repertoire. For children in town with the help of the County Legislature a very successful children's parade took place on the 4th of July and another parade for Halloween began on Webster Street for trick or treating as part of the annual Haunted Harbor. Both were very popular and I'm sure will continue. During the holidays the Christmas Caroling Wagon acquired a record 10,808 cans of food for the Food Pantry and the Meals on Wheels program continues to serve more resident's ages 75 to 100 with over 110 to 125 meals distributed on Christmas Eve alone in the Tonawandas. In addition to this very needed service we now will see the fruition of the Little Free Pantries project which allows residents to take the food they need and give what they can. They now will have an easy access to food in a dignified manner. The Winter Walk drew record crowds with the addition of activities along the Oliver Street corridor. Without a doubt the Historic Carrousel Museum which celebrated its 70th Anniversary continues to draw young and old alike from our residents and tourists.

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This past summer saw a myriad of activities especially for families. Pine Woods Park hosted a fun summer camp-out supervised by our auxiliary police. Tents dotted the park and many camping activities were available for families to enjoy. Gateway hosted the long established Pizza Fest which became overwhelming with attendees. The Carrousel Days leading up to Canal Fest kicked off the week-long celebration and after many years NT finally won the Tug of War. The Tonawanda Mayor had to push the wheel barrow over the bridge which was an exciting moment for NT. Different sponsors held events at Gratwick Riverside Park including sports activities, concerts, kite flying, and other family events with the demand increasing. The popular Thunder on the Niagara and Wine and Brews Fest again were successful events and will continue.

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Public Safety in all areas of this City is paramount. The establishment of the new Anti-Bullying Law which became an interest of National and International news is a much needed step to keep our youth safe. Two new officers were added to the law enforcement agency and a new chief was sworn in this past July. Along with the County Sherriff's department a dispatch dispute was negotiated so the NT Police department now has a single channel designated only for North Tonawanda. In conjunction with the Sherriff's department we now have an alert system in place to notify residents of city wide concerns. Improved repair lighting has taken place in the downtown area and new cameras are being installed for greater public safety. The Fire Department responded to over 3,300 incidents in 2017 the busiest year ever. We took delivery of a new state of the art self- contained breathing apparatus, SCBA, partially funded through a \$250,000 grant written by a North Tonawanda Firefighter. We purchased a unique floating pump through a grant donated by the Niagara County Legislature. The pump can be used to get water from surrounding waterways. The City will take delivery in April 2018 of a new medium duty rescue vehicle. This was half funded through a Municipal Facilities Capital Funding Grant. We have begun another grant initiative in order to purchase a new fire engine for the City.

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A new NT Community Resource Hub service is now provided for residents allowing them to access information from service providers in our WNY area in a convenient manner. Legal and family services, insurance, weatherization, transportation service and connecting people to employment are some of the needed services the residents may previously had a hard time accessing. Hometown Heroes' Banners program has been expanded with the first 3 new Veterans to be honored. Gratwick Park was rededicated with new signage and the pavilion was named in memory of former Alderman, Russ Rizzo. Also the pavilion at the City market was

dedicated to Elmer Moje who sold produce there for 100 years, and a new permanent band shell is constructed at Raymond Klimek Veteran's Park on the water which will host many new events this coming summer. The Children's Memorial Garden is starting to take shape at Brauer Park with the donations of local business companies. The new clock tower planned for Webster and Main Streets is being designed for the future of Downtown along with other amenities at the Charles Fleishman Park.

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The City has hired a grant writer to help obtain funds for future projects and to become more efficient in City operations. The City website is up and running to provide greater awareness to residents for information about City Government. It is now more user-friendly and a location for residents to obtain information about City events, public meetings and includes a new feature with a question and answer box for residents to voice their concerns. The Niagara Gazette NT Extra paper has provided much needed information to residents along with the Amherst Bee and the Niagara Wheatfield/North Tonawanda Tribune. The addition of the new Twin-Cities Sun paper is even more comprehensive. So residents now have several outlets for news in town.

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The City Legal Department is looking into possible updates or revisions of codes and ordinances which may be out dated or no longer effective. This department is busier than ever in these days of litigation and is keeping the City protected within Federal, State and Local laws to make sure we are in compliance. They also are involved directly or indirectly with all departments dealing with employee issues and contract negotiations to name a few. Our new City historian has been actively involved in research concerning the history of certain land and buildings which played a significant role in our development. He continually provides suggestions on how our history can be highlighted in our forward plans. Having received a communication from a city in France concerning an unknown American soldier from WW II, who was born and lived in North Tonawanda, our Historian was able to provide information and identify the soldier buried in a French cemetery.

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The future holds many exciting improvements for our City and with vision and focus we can make it happen. Our geographical location holds uniqueness with the confluence of the Erie

Canal and Niagara River within a short distance from Buffalo and Niagara Falls. This should allow us to continue to develop our downtown and waterfront areas. Having our own Tonawanda Island is a tremendous asset to be developed in the future. We have more business inquiries coming forth each day and many ideas are put forth to include other areas of our City. It is an honor and a privilege to serve as Mayor of North Tonawanda and with cooperation and effort we can continue to move this City in a positive forward direction. Special thanks go to Governor Cuomo, Senator Rob Ortt, Assemblyman Robin Schimminger, Legislators Rich Andres and Randy Brandt, Mike Zimmerman, Dale Marshall and Robert Orlowski, who were influential in obtaining grants for our City. Thank you to our Department Heads: Chief Sikora and Chief Zgolak along with Patty Brosius, Brad Rowles, Bill Davignon, Dale Marshall, Coz Capozzi, Amanda Reimer, Barb Klenke, Dan Quinn, our City Historian Joe Midura and our City Attorney Luke Brown, and all who assist them to keep this City a pleasant and desirable place to live. Thank you to all City employees, members of the Common Council and residents for the support to make NT stronger, effective and fiscally healthy. We are in good shape right now providing needed services in cost effective ways. Thank you.