

Mayor Nelson Santos
2019 Mayors' Outlook Breakfast
Leamington & District Chamber of Commerce
January 11, 2019
Colasanti's Tropical Gardens, Ruthven, Ontario

(Ring that bell!) Good morning local Chamber friends, neighbours, ladies and gentlemen. The bells have recently helped ring in the New Year and it is great to see so many of you joining us here to kick-off 2019.

As forecast here at this event, 2018 was a year of great learning, growth, and prosperity. Yet recognizing that it has been less than a year since we last met here, we also knew that there was potential for great change in 2018 and as we take stock, much has already changed across our communities, within our businesses, and even in this room. We see how the business climate along with shifts in government have changed.

And with it we are finding new approaches, new styles, in supporting the constant goal of keeping those business doors open.

So here we are again, having just planted some new seeds for the season both, literally given the delay in winter, and figuratively as many of you are well into your business development and planning for what is yet to come.

And yes that includes more cowbell! Because what's a morning show without some fun and candid moments to go with your hosts "Mayor Hilda & Me". Today we are here with a supporting cast of municipal staff and members of council, to help us shine a light on the highlights of 2018 and offer a sampling of all that is brewing in 2019 for our communities.

Today's breakfast event with the Leamington & District Chamber of Commerce continues in this traditional gathering here in the heart of remote southern Ontario in Ruthven: home of the grandest Olympian of our millennium – Meghan Agosta. And our hometown pride for Paralympian Corbin Watson. #Team Canada

Thus let's not forget, and I know that in this room it's not even a question as it is more like our way of life. So, let's not forget, that it is within our communities, and our region here in Windsor-Essex where we can argue that 'Our Canada' begins. Our friends from the Windsor Essex Economic Development Corporation, and Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island, and Workforce WindsorEssex all know that the value added to our Canadian and North American Economy has a tremendously significant local contribution to jobs, trade, services and the goods we make and the goods we grow.

Combine this presence with the allure of our space and you cannot ignore the visits and visitors we enjoy with tourism from our blooming seasons to the fine feathered and fluttery-winged migration phenomena we have in Canada's most southern points.

To the Chamber membership, let's raise a glass of the finest brews, (coffee, wine, county craft beer, whisky, and more county cowbell) Thank you for bringing us together. Cheers.

In times when it is easily tempting to follow our own course, or believe we can do better on our own; we must remember that it is through our open doors that our relationships will grow and our hard work will ultimately achieve. There are no walls built that keep us out of the blessed opportunity that Canada represents and we see no walls being built around the often complicated London that we fear many get lost. We will continue to work to help those see that we are indeed here and we need to stand strong right here; in Kingsville, with Leamington,

across Essex County, with Windsor and with Chatham-Kent too. Together we can certainly strongly shake that notion and that 'urban legend' that Ontario stops at London.

Our Chamber knows that more can get done working collaboratively and sharing success stories and celebrating them. But during today's morning show, indeed we will be talking about life and the tales from our two communities along with the reasons why you are here and why this place is the right place to be. Let me borrow from the Raptors and use a little creative license, 'WE The South' are learning, adapting, innovating, and growing. 'WE The South' are getting stronger, smarter, and based on the trends from our two towns, Kingsville and Leamington represents the 'it' place where many are looking to call home.

This isn't your average morning show and I'm grateful that Her Worship Mayor Hilda and myself have an opportunity to present you with our ever-sharpening focus on our communities, our goals, our visions and our communities' active plans.

We don't always agree or have to agree on the path to take, but we can remain principled, and collectively, I trust you will see that our passions ultimately do believe in this journey as more often than not, we will come to each other's side and put forward a remarkable argument supporting investments across all sectors.

So here we are after a decade of savouring all that grows 'along the 42' and the diversity that nourishes our towns' successes.

Inspiring us as leaders is that passion and the genuine effort that each of you give to this place we call home. From your business, from your service, as an owner, employee or entrepreneur, as you welcome each day within our boundaries, this is what helps us stand strong and helps us maintain a positive outlook even in the most challenging times. And in seemingly prosperous times—

it is this blend of work ethic and commitment to community that seems to make the difference every time. The unknowns are many entering 2019, as we all watch for the transitions to come with trade agreements, cannabis lotteries and access to markets for our products, our talents, our future.

In the past two years, we have learned so much on how our recovery and growth is leading the way to better employment, stronger trade, and greater confidence. Advancing quality of life through access to health care, physician recruitment and team building with our Erie Shores Health Team also play well to the strengths making our area a key location to call home. But our local health care pillar, our community hospital cannot be taken for granted.

The services it provides must maintain its diversity as well as be responsive to the changes and pressures we are seeing. The Hospital has a role not only for our communities, but also as a player supporting regional care, in the current mix and in the future as a network with the proposed new regional hospital development.

From Health care to employment opportunities, our Windsor Essex Economic Development Corporation will attest that the lessons we learned over the past few years taught us many things and have solidified some important relationships across the region with some significant focus of diversification and an eye to taking advantage of the strengths we have right here in our backyard. The entrepreneurial spirit in our region is stronger than ever; the demand for skilled trades is still on the climb; innovation is growing; and our agriculture and culture under glass continues its innovation. Our greenhouse sector is growing both purposefully and cautiously. Locally our share as the capital of North America has been reinforced. And an identified opportunity has sharpened its focus providing a new window for job prospects if we are willing to work for it. In 2019,

expect this work to test some new waters and territory, that our perceived 'small town Ontario' would never have had to participate before.

And just when you couldn't think the grass would get any greener here on the 'south side', another agri-giant is just awakening. Heading into 2019, the medicinal marijuana growing facilities, its processes and evolution will continue right before our very eyes. While we seek to grasp what this reality will still look like, the spotlight is heavily shining on our communities as natural hosts. As you are hearing today, we are finding successes, we are finding progress and we are finding a way.

But our community is not without concerns from all levels, and thus ensuring that there are measurables and expectations in place as part of any future build that will help Kingsville maintain its strength in its overall community building strategy.

Many of you in attendance again today, have heard me refer to a core message I repeat each year. The core principles of 'Collaboration, Cooperation, and Communication' are key to how they are helping write Kingsville's story. These chapters seem to have been written many times over but without review and lessons learned, we don't grow. We are growing because a 'respect' has been established through communication and a collaborative approach to understanding each other's goals. On a good day, each of these represent a challenge on their own and like the food we grow and crops we harvest, nurturing these principles and feeding their significant demands is vital.

At the end of the day, it is every bit worth the effort because combined, these principles lead us to progress: progress in our workplace; progress in our society and most importantly progress in our communities.

Now I see a few familiar faces in the crowd again this year. It's always great to see that the Chamber has their seasoned ticket holders watching our every

move. And look at all the new faces and first-time attendees this morning! It's great to see you...I'm hoping it's the impressive dialogue from your Mayors that brought you here, but something about that taste of Colasanti's may be that extra incentive to bring you here. Who said local incentives don't work to attract business! In all seriousness, I certainly want to say 'thank you' to the entire Colasanti family for opening your doors to us again and for being that 'award winning destination place' that brings us back time and time again.

From TWEPI's repeat winners from the 'Best Of...' honours to the local employment opportunities and experiences offered here, we are fortunate to have such a place where the bounty of the county is well represented all under one roof.

Now, where else can you find information about your community all under one roof? Well one website where your answers can be found at is our updated and recently highly acclaimed and award winning website: www.MyKingsville.ca – Check it out and you'll find all that is happening in Kingsville and you'll find your direct connection to the all the businesses, destinations, and community information that you would ever need. The 'MyKingsville' page is fully refreshed, mobile friendly and is waiting for your visit. From dining to new discoveries, Kingsville has a table ready for you along with a menu, or two, or twenty that will tempt your palate.

And if your palate is about talent and creativity, there is some great artistry in the mix with lessons being offered from painting to design that might be calling out your name this year. Some of our award winning wineries are also getting into the mix for the multi-taskers in the room who like to dab in colours while enjoying those local blends and vintage award winning wines. (mykingsville.ca)

Now in keeping with the success stories that we have bottled up over the years, it's time to release the 2018 Kingsville Vintage that has blended from so many collective efforts. (cb)

Let's get into the fun and games department first. Yes, Parks & Rec where the cowbell has been long famed in rinks across the nation. Our Festivals & Events grew in numbers this past year with increased tourism numbers from the highly acclaimed and nominated Kingsville Folk Music Festival to the always important and local cultural classics of Migration Festival and our Fantasy of Lights Santa Claus Parade. As the town continues to invest in its waterfront parks and public spaces, the popular Toast to Kingsville returned with great success with its collaboration with Pelee Island Winery and Eat Drink Dine Kingsville. This event supports all three partners in some form and collectively celebrates the fine tastes found exclusively in our hometown. It's a pillar of the ongoing Mettawas Waterfront Park Development plans as phase one's Battram Memorial Garden is now complete and Phase 2 is nearing completion of the new Grovedale House for the arts and culture. This 'revival house' has historic leanings as a gathering place that at one time served as a neighbour to Hiram Walker's grandiose Mettawas Inn. Special events and community fundraising plans to support this continues in full swing. Keep your eye out for an invite to the Inaugural Mayor's Swing golf tournament at Kingsville Golf & Country Club later this summer.

But even in Parks & Rec, its success comes from structural support from other departments. Our Municipal Services is on board and supporting the ongoing design of Mettawas Park in full this coming year, and expects to be supporting the initial stages and construction of the community-engaged support of the Lions Park project.

This past year, the Municipal Services team were part of the restoration of a set of community park improvements including installation of new playgrounds,

enhanced CWATS (active transportation) linkages and trail development throughout the municipality. They played a lead role in the support and adoption of the Cottam Revitalization plan with the community inspired committee and initial improvements from those recommendations are already in play. 2019 will carry on that momentum.

Community development is truly very challenging at the best of times and still make part of many exciting times, but can stall at any time if we don't remember what we have learned in getting here. Its true formula for success comes often with many hands coming together. I cannot express through words alone the appreciation our town and council have for the administrative team, management and hard-working staff of our municipality and its additional supports at the County of Essex as well.

To our staff that express their pride through the hours and hours they commit to making Kingsville bloom and creative. To the volunteers and community engagement we see every day through active committees and dedicated service clubs that make each day greater. This is what I'm thankful for...a community spirit leading success and not being afraid to work through times of adversity.

And from what we have learned over the past decade here--and for what we aspire to keep learning over the decades to come--it is that coping with change is much easier when you are engaging others to help create it as a collective. This is how we continue on our path and how we are coping with change in Canada's Most Southern Town.

Again, this is why we are here. This event recognizes that while we have our own identity and strengths across Kingsville and Leamington, we have a brand with some common threads but still unique in our everyday.

Ultimately, our goals focus on establishing a sustainable environment that will grow our investment; that will tell the story of our two towns and give us an identity.

And with that, let's move to a question where we have some greater insights. Where did 2018 leave us and what is ringing in for 2019?

On the residential side of growth, Kingsville was home to 108 new dwelling units created last year at a construction value of over \$42.6 million. This brings the last four years (last term) of development to total 487 homes built and is representative of the steady growth we have been seeing and contributing to future investment and helping fund growth pressures. Our development charges helped raise another \$1 million dollars showing that new development is buying in to the community and supporting its growth before it joins our future assessment base. This Financial tool which was updated in 2018 has assisted our municipality in its growth pressures and planning for future capital pressures associated to growth.

In 2018, the total construction value was reported at nearly \$80.8 million through 415 permits. The greenhouse sector saw two new builds/expansions covering almost 9.5 new acres at a value of just over \$11 million. Other agricultural development also saw a significant increase in the number of permits to 39 valued at \$3.1 million. For our business community here, you may want to take note and accept our appreciation for your confidence in Kingsville this past year. We opened 35 new commercial permits valued at an investment of over \$10 million. This is a significant progressive step up from 2017 where \$2 million in commercial construction was experienced. And when jobs are part of the collective goal, this commercial investment combined with new industrial development in 2018 added 13 new permits and a construction value of \$8.3 million. This increase is above the 2017 industrial experience of \$2.1 million.

Looking forward, the trend again sees 2019 keeping pace as service-ready lots across six subdivisions are readying for the coming construction season including within our communities of Ruthven and Cottam. And movement on servicing on at least one new subdivision is under engineering development.

For our Building Department, this represents the first time their total annual permits were over 410 for back-to-back years. Add their responsibilities under the By-Law Activities, and they saw an increase from 280 cases in 2017 to 346 cases in 2018. Remarkably, this proactive and highly motivated department resolved 339 cases leaving 7 on the table heading into 2019. A great job ... a great team effort.

I want to recognize that earlier in 2018 our Building Officials also collaborated with the Town of Leamington and put on an information session for the greenhouse industry and local partners. All part of their goal and target for increased education of the building community to include the ongoing changes and updates to the Building Code. And from council's perspective, offering funding and budgetary support to implement a new permitting software system is going to assist this continued progress in this area.

With Building also comes Planning and the important role that it shares in the community's current success and future development. From the policy side, the 5-year Official Plan Review is well underway and being carried over into this year. Our Municipality also hosted a series of three Mayor's Roundtables in 2018 each covering pivotal components of municipal planning from affordable housing, tourism and economic development. Coming forward this year will be the draft strategies developed from these discussions with stakeholders and the implementation of a much needed Affordable Housing Strategy to complement and enhance the initiatives that Council had previously established as well as

increase public education and awareness on the potential for secondary dwelling units.

2019 sees our municipality looking to keep its hands on the pulse of development planning surrounding the monitoring and updating of cannabis policies. After having officially approved 9 rezoning applications to date, monitoring of any Federally Licensed Part 1 operations will begin as part of the new interim controls on cannabis developments. There is much to learn from them, and this experience will lead to improved policy and community development standards overall.

On the Infrastructure side and plans for 2019, our draft municipal budget is looking at a preliminary capital works program of approximately \$12 million in expenditures. Enhancements of our roads will see initial phases of Jasperson Lane improvements as well as a portion of Heritage Road/Old Highway 18A with support from the County of Essex addressing this important connecting link. Some important reconstruction of Graham Side Road and mill and paving of Lansdowne Avenue.

More specifically, our residents will see the fourth phase installments of our growing active transportation network representing nearly half a million dollars in local and county levy investments specifically at County Road 50 to Ford Road and the cut-thru from County Road 50 from Lake Drive to Conservation; also look for the continuation of our sidewalk improvements and upgrades.

Moving over to our Parks & Rec enhancements; investments in new and replacement playground equipment will continue in the effort to provide a balance to the quality of life and place in Kingsville for families, seniors, youth, residents and visitors. On this list features \$140,000 towards the continued Cottam Revitalization program, our Range Light relocation plan in cooperation with the Kingsville Historical Park & Museum and more.

On the fun side, our festival line-up is certain to light up our 2019 season. This year's exciting line-up includes our popular tradition of looking to the past and nothing says history and heritage like the return of the Kingsville Highland Games. We are proud to announce that we will be hosting the Highland Games on June 22, 2019 at Lakeside Park. Certain aspects of the Games are well known and are emblematic of Scotland. While these Games will be centered on bagpipes, drumming, highland dance, athletic sport and a 5k Kilt run, we are also inviting the Mayors or your Designate Deputy Mayors from each of our neighbouring communities to compete in the prestigious "Kingsville Haggis" competition. (CB)

The Kingsville Haggis Championship involves the hurling of a haggis towards a whiskey barrel and landing it on top for best accuracy. This skill will be no ordinary feat. It will require a special subtle technique that makes you throw it to the barrel, yet giving it a gentle landing, subtle enough to keep the haggis intact and still possible to eat. It will take more than just brute force to have the skill to carry out this out. Points will also count for best dressed - Celtic.

Of course, the Annual Kingsville Folk Music Festival is back to kick-off the 2nd weekend of August 2019 and that will be followed by the Tall Ships Ontario Tour where Kingsville will be the only Canadian Port on Lake Erie. Working with community volunteers and support from the Co-ownership of the Kingsville Harbour to host this ship adventure, August 16th to 18th will be a destination you want to be on board with. Speaking of history, the town is welcoming four tall ships along with some other variety ships. But wait, there is one that will certainly make guests turn on a dime, and yes the famous Blue Nose will be among the fleet here in Kingsville's Harbour. More details are coming but be sure to join us for an unforgettable weekend and take advantage of the offered sail away experience that you won't want to miss. (CB)

On the Business side of economic development, Kingsville is poised to pursue an important update in its Business Retention & Expansion initiative awaiting a grant consideration. We will look to our business community both here and support networks, agencies and groups to help us in this pursuit that looks at our current businesses acknowledging their current contributions to our economy and their future.

And our 2nd annual Kingsville Business Awards event is set for May 30th to be held at Pelee Island Winery. Please save the date and help us celebrate our business community with your presence. Stay tuned for the opening of nomination period.

Finally, it must be recognized that within municipalities, all of our work is quite a balancing act. With this continued balance of infrastructure investments and stretching the value of every municipal dollar in play for this budget year, Kingsville continues to enjoy the second lowest municipal property tax in the region.

And since we started all these Chamber events, when you combine the water and sewer surcharge rates, Kingsville can again reclaim its stake as the 'most affordable community' to live in Windsor-Essex County going into 2019.

As we keep moving forward with our momentum, we shall continue to keep an eye on our vision and goals on a regular basis. Thus with a freshly minted strategy in place, we have seen positive results in 2018 and anticipate continued progress for this year. It will also serve as a starting point for review by our new council-elect to help carry on. Sculpting this 'Vision 2020 & Better' has taken time and patience along with public input and participation. These refreshed sets of priorities with targeted measurables will seek to provide a live record of its progress through ongoing updates.

Thank you friends, for your time and dedication to our communities. Thank you for this opportunity to share our outlook for this year. May our history of working together, continue to lead us into the future, stronger, together.

Nelson Santos
Mayor of Kingsville