

Notes For Remarks
Mayor Heather Watson
August 10, 2026

Friends, neighbours,
Distinguished guests,
And members of our wonderful Douro-Dummer community...

It was exactly four years ago to the day,
And in this very room...
That I announced my candidacy
For Mayor of the Township of Douro Dummer.

I did so in full knowledge
Of the many local leaders and community builders
Who had come before me,

Each of whom had played a role
In laying the foundation
That has made this great community
The success story that it is today.

This evening,
With those contributions
And that legacy firmly in mind,
I am announcing my candidacy
For re-election
As Mayor of the Township of Douro-Dummer.

Serving as your Mayor
Has been one of the great honours of my life.

Over the past four years,
With the assistance of the members of council...
Our excellent Township staff...
And engaged citizens from every corner
Of the Township,

We have risen to meet
A series of difficult challenges,
And we have done so
With creativity, collaboration and determination.

To be frank, some of those challenges
Had an element of urgency to them.

For example, four years ago
We inherited a deficit
In the quality and maintenance of our infrastructure...

Roads, parks, arenas...
Community spaces and public facilities,
And in the funding needed
To bring them up to a better standard.

But we identified the problem
And acted on it.

At the Douro Community Centre this year,
Our improvements to the aging arena floor,
The ice surface and the in-floor heating
Represented the largest capital project
In Township history...

Until our approval
Of the new joint fire hall and public works building
This year...
With a capital investment of \$11.1 million,
Which beat that record.

I am delighted that
We will be breaking ground
On this excellent project
This fall.

And I want to highlight
Our investment in our roads as well...
Another area that definitely required our attention.

Over the past four budgets,
We have invested almost \$5.9 million
In gravel and surface treatments
For our roads.

That's a 29 per cent increase
Over the previous term of council,
And the results are there
For all to see.

We looked at our infrastructure deficit,

And we have done our best to make it right.

Four years ago,
We faced another deficit...
This one in the standard of our financial undertakings,

Particularly in the practice
Of financial reporting and budgeting...
The securing of provincial and federal funds...
And the deferral of essential public investments.

We put our finances on a solid footing.
We put our books in good working order.
And we modernized our operations
And improved our efficiencies.

We have done our best to make it right.

Four years ago
We experienced yet another deficit,
Falling well behind other communities
In the ways that we create and improve
Public access and engagement
Between citizens and their government.

So, we modernized the tools
That allow us to connect with each other,
Opening the windows to our business,
And inviting more public input
And community debate
Than we had seen in decades.

Of course,
Opening those windows
Can create some passionate discourse
That can be both heartfelt and animated,

And most of you will have witnessed that
From time to time.

But that's what democracy looks like,
Especially to those of us who believe
That engagement is always better than apathy.

We have done our best to make it right.

In addition,
We have actively supported local businesses
And the farming community.

We've reached out in new ways
To strengthen our recreation opportunities
And our tourism prospects.

We've worked closely
With our county and provincial partners
To ensure that our voice is always heard
And always respected.

And we've done all of this
While maintaining
The rural character, heritage
And sense of belonging
That make our Township so special.

Of course, our work is never done.

I will be launching a new website tomorrow...
HeatherWatsonForMayor.ca...
Where I will be announcing additional policies
As the campaign moves forward.

Some of those policies
Will speak directly
To the issue of affordability...

And the need to help cut costs,
And keep the cost of living down
For all residents.

Some of you will remember
The campaign theme that I introduced
When I first ran for Mayor in 2022.

It was ... in a phrase,
"Building on Tradition."

That phrase was only a few words,
But those words spoke volumes
About who we are,
And who we want to be.

Those few words
Asked us all to attempt the impossible.
That is, looking forward and looking backward
At the same time.

Yes, we need to proudly move forward
in building our community...

And yes, we need to proudly look backward
In honouring the traditions and heritage
Of our shared rural values.

Building on tradition.

This is the balance that is at play in every decision I make.

And this is the balance that I will I continue to advance going forward.

I have long believed that politicians
Should be publically accountable
For the things they say and do,
And especially for the promises they make.

Four years ago,
On the basis of a very extensive series
Of meetings with constituents,

I proposed an action plan
Containing 50 commitments
That I promised to act on
If I became Mayor.

Yes, it may have been an ambitious list.
But yes, I cared about
Each and every one of those commitments,
And I still do.

Tonight, in the interest of accountability,

I will be distributing my report
On just how well the council and I have fared
In bringing that action plan to life.

And I will be posting it online as well.

Here's what the report says.

Of the 50 commitments in my action plan,
34 have either been completed or substantially completed,
And 10 more have had documented action
And are progressing towards completion.

That's 44 of 50,
And that's an 88 per cent success rate.

Have we done well enough?
Well, I think that 88 percent is a solid indication
That we are working hard
And headed in the right direction.

Nonetheless, it is right
That each of you decide for yourselves.

As we look ahead,
Our Township faces important decisions
About growth, infrastructure,
And the future of our rural services.

We must build a modern township
Where families, youth and seniors can thrive.

We must create the conditions
That permit farmers and businesses to prosper.

We must invest in our roads, buildings
and community infrastructure.

We must protect our farmland,
Our lakes, and our natural environment.

We must continue to modernize
Our municipal operations,
And improve our efficiencies
In everything we do.

And that includes having another look
At the creative and responsible ways
That we can speed up
The processes we have in place
For reviewing developments...

And in particular, for issuing building permits.

Finally, we must make clear to Transport Canada
That the rail project known as Alto
Is not welcome in our community...

And I will not support it
Until all of our concerns about it
Are fully satisfied.

So, is all this a tall order?

Perhaps, but no taller
Than the spirit and the will
Of our community
To come together,
And to succeed
In our own interest.

My commitment to you is simple.

I will continue to lead with integrity...
Accountability...
And a deep respect for the people
Who call our Township home.

I will continue to listen...
Without judgement...
To every person from every corner of the community...
Who seeks to make this
A better place.

And I will continue to work every day
To make sure that Douro-Dummer remains a place
Where community matters...

Where neighbours help neighbours...

And where we constantly remind ourselves

That we are stronger together.

This campaign is not about me ...
It's about us,
And the future we want to build together.

I am proud of what we have accomplished.

I am energized by what lies ahead.

And I am respectfully asking for your support.

Thank you.

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