

CAROLYN MILNE REMARKS

Hamilton Community Foundation “Thank You Celebration” in Honour of Carolyn Milne Liuna Station – September 29, 2009

Thank you very much, Mark.

To say that I'm overwhelmed would be an absolute understatement.

I want to begin by thanking the Board of HCF for hosting this wonderful event tonight that brings together our HCF family – that wonderful intersection in our community where our donors, professional advisors, community leaders, community foundation colleagues, current Board and past Board members, volunteers, staff and youth come together. Relationships that are long-held, deep and enduring.

I am honoured that the Board has established the Leadership Forum and thrilled that we can count on an annual speaker who will continue to challenge us as a community as we strive to learn and work together for the city that we aspire to and the life that we believe is the right for all Hamiltonians. There is a saying, and I'm going to edit it slightly:

Coming together is a beginning

Keeping together is progress

Learning and working together is success

While reluctant to have a public event, in the end I knew that it would be a wonderful opportunity for me to turn the tables and thank all of you for this extraordinary leadership experience and opportunity.

And so let me begin...

Many of you have heard me speak about the privilege of leadership and how those of us in these formal positions often receive all of the accolades, when in fact it takes an army to make us look good and achieve our goals. Yes, we bring leadership skills and knowledge, but for the Community Foundation, it all starts with a group of people who feel a responsibility to give back to their community and beyond – our donors – and I know that many of you are here tonight – you make it all possible. Our donors are an extraordinary group of people who come from all walks of life and who fundamentally care and want to give back to their community. It has been a privilege to be part of your philanthropic hopes and dreams for your community and the issues that you are committed to.

In addition to these extraordinary people, over the last 14 years, I have had the benefit of working with exceptional Boards that have made a series of governance decisions that have positioned us today to weather and grow beyond this current economic crisis. Thank you for your support, wisdom and challenge.

And there is one Board member who I would particularly like to single out and thank, and that is Past Chair Terry Yates. Terry, thank you for giving me this job and this opportunity!

And then there are the staff. My job was to set the strategic context, maintain the optimism and energy, and then together they are the ones who make the robust decisions that set our mission into motion and make choices that define the organization and help to determine its success. To my staff colleagues, thank you for your dedication, commitment and the excellence that you bring to your roles every day at HCF. It has been a privilege to be your leader.

And to my community colleagues – and you know who you are. Our efforts over the years to build our relationships, develop trust and share learnings have resulted in new ways of working together that are building on the collective wisdom and ingenuity of all sectors and our citizens. I thank you for your courage, honesty, support and passion for this city.

And to Monica Patten and my community foundation colleagues who are here today – thank you for the opportunity to share ideas, challenges, materials and the inspiration of your leadership. It is an extraordinary network, and when we have come together, I always have this profound feeling of our country's potential and possibilities.

So you see, it does take an army, and a lot of people are responsible for the leader's success. And certainly our family and friends have a huge role to play behind the scenes. The support of my friends and my husband Paul have been an anchor for me – especially Paul. He is my greatest critic and my greatest cheerleader, and he has been a wonderful mentor for me for the past 36 years. Thank you, Paul.

And so this evening has not only given me the opportunity to say thank you, but to now close with a few personal reflections.

I want to take you back to July 1995, and I've just had a few days of orientation with my predecessor Judith McCulloch and it's now time for her to leave. I step out to give her some time with Anne Lupkoski, her Executive Assistant – my new Executive Assistant – and when I return, Judith is gone, and Anne looks at me and says, "You know, Carolyn, I was just thinking – you must be really scared because you really don't know anything." I thought, oh my goodness, she can read my mind! And, of course, that was the beginning of a great 14-year partnership, and Anne would continue to bring her empathy and honesty to her role.

But she was right, there were so many things that I didn't know, and so here are a few things that I learned about our community, its people and the leadership required. I've learned that:

1. Hamiltonians have a history of generosity and a compassion and empathy for others – whether it's a local issue or a crisis in another part of the world. And, given the

opportunity to know more about the issues and stories and their impact on their fellow Hamiltonians, I have seen them respond consistently by asking how they can help. Some describe us as having a blue-collar sensibility or an absence of ego. Perhaps the best example of this is our beloved Lincoln Alexander, who cruises our city in his scooter, connecting with Hamiltonians. Relationships, beyond all else, are our major strength. We are of a size where we can think like a big city, but nimble enough to take action as required.

2. I've learned that when you invite youth into your organization (and many of them are here tonight – fondly referred to as our “YACs” – our Youth Advisory Council), they will inspire you, motivate you, and remind us why we need to be better at what we do. I invite you to introduce yourself to these up-and-comers.

3. I've learned that Hamilton is in an extraordinary transition. Mr. Mayor, I understand that this morning you described our city as going forward with great momentum – what a great word! We've already changed dramatically from steel town to health town, with the health sector employing some 38,000 people. Clinical services are expanding and research funds have increased by more than 100% in 5 years. This service-based industry has become a major economic engine in South Central Ontario.
 - Our universities and college are expanding and embracing innovation and entrepreneurship as core elements of their mission. McMaster alone is rated as one of the most research intensive universities in Canada, and one of only 4 Canadian universities in the world's top 100. Today's Spectator announced a collaborative of 12 researchers from 4 universities and 10 industry partners that will develop and commercialize new products for treating vision disorders. It was also reported that McMaster Innovation Park is now 80% full and, over the next 15 years, officials hope to have 14 buildings and workplaces for 3,000 people.

 - We have more than 31,000 full-time students attending our post-secondary institutions every year. Think about the opportunity we have to retain this talent and new energy.

 - The current and potential spin-offs are the envy of many cities trying to reinvent themselves.

4. I've learned that the arts scene in Hamilton is emerging as an important engine of our transformation. Our city is drawing artists from all over, especially Toronto, not just because of our city's affordability, but also because of the welcoming nature and the reputation of the sector. Just experience the music from the new music collective, or sign up for the Art Bus or the James Street Art Crawl to experience the energy and excitement, or visit our renovated Art Gallery, the 5th largest gallery in Canada.

- CBC's *The Hour*, in an interview with real estate expert Don Campbell, identified Hamilton as the #1 place in Canada to invest in property. Clearly, some people are in the know.
 - Our natural heritage is breathtaking. We're at the head of the world's largest supply of fresh water and one of the finest natural harbours on the Great Lakes. We are enveloped by the Niagara escarpment and blessed with green space and the splendor of 126 waterfalls. Our trail system allows us to explore our community by foot, bike or even on horseback, along the lake, the Bruce Trail, through the Dundas Valley and the Red Hill Valley.
 - We have been a destination of choice for new immigrants and have benefited from their courage, entrepreneurship and passion for their new country and city.
 - And finally, our local community leaders – our Mayor, elected officials and city staff – understand that the current challenges that confront us, like cities all over the world, cannot be solved by one sector or one organization alone. So we now have multi-sector tables drawing on our collective perspective and wisdom to reduce and prevent poverty, create jobs and prosperity, and attract immigrants.
 - This new way of working has drawn attention from as far away as New Zealand, and most recently the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction was awarded the David Crombie Award for collaborative work on solutions to complex problems.
5. I have learned that we have to stop defining our community by our downtown core and our steel mills. They are an important part of who we are – our future success – and part of our transition challenge, but today WE ARE SO MUCH MORE THAN THAT!

And I, like you, get frustrated with reading about our city in our national newspapers in articles that do not capture the glass half full. For me, the straw that broke the camel's back was during a recent trip to Windsor to visit friends, when I opened the Windsor Star newspaper to find an article based on a less-than-positive Globe & Mail article about Hamilton. At the Community Foundation, we have an aerial view of our community and we know that our strengths and assets far outweigh our challenges. We also know and understand that communities are built on their strengths, not on their weaknesses.

The cycle of negative talk has to stop and it will have to start with Hamiltonians, and so why not let it start with those of us in this room tonight?

So where do we start? Well, we know that a picture is worth a thousand words, and it seems that national publications continue to use Hamilton's "passport picture" in articles that they write. Many people travel across the Skyway Bridge and believe that that view of the steel mills defines us as a city – it's the only picture of Hamilton they have seen.

So I invite you to join us at the Community Foundation to begin to set the record straight. I have loaded 5 spectacular pictures of our city onto my Blackberry, and tonight you can go to our website and download those same pictures onto your computers and remote devices. Just think – we could have Hamiltonians with pictures of their kids, grandchildren and the city that they call home, and the next time a squelcher says

- “I hear things in Hamilton are pretty bad.”
You can respond with “Oh, you’re talking about the “cup half empty” story. Here’s the other story that no one is talking about and here are some details. And by the way, I just happen to have some pictures that define my Hamilton.”

Transitions are never easy, and I think the transition required is our own mindset. With so much going for us, let’s change the conversation to
“We can because we believe we can.”

As I step away from my leadership position at the Community Foundation, I am confident that HCF will continue to play a leadership role as we navigate our way through this exciting transition. We can count on the Foundation to continue to be a great champion for Hamilton and an innovator as a community builder.

In closing, it has been an honour and privilege to lead HCF, and I am as excited today as I was 14 years ago for its potential and our city’s future.

Thank you.