INAUGURAL SPEECH OF HON. MA. JOSEFINA G. BELMONTE Mayor, Quezon City

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To my husband and my family; friends, supporters, and allies; to all those who shared their time and resources to make this day possible; *sa lahat ng mga mabal kong taga Quezon City; isang magandang hapon po sa inyong lahat.*

Maraming salamat po sa pagdalo ninyo kabit Linggo ngayon na araw para sa pamilya. Tanggapin din po ninyo ang aking taus-pusong pasasalamat sa inyong pakikitisa sa amin. This is a day of new beginnings, and we are greatly humbled by your presence and support.

Please allow me to begin by paraphrasing the Good Book, which in Ecclesiastes 3 says, "there is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to plant and a time to uproot; a time for conflict and a time for peace; a time to tear down, and a time to build; a time to be silent and a time to speak; a time to hate, and a time to love; a time for tears, and a time for joy."

Naandito ako ngayon sapagkat meron akong pangarap at meron din akong tungkulin. My dream is for everyone in Quezon City to have choices and opportunities because I believe that every individual should have the power to shape one's life according to what would give one greatest meaning, according to what would give one immense joy. But in order to do this, in order to fulfil our potential we have to be empowered to do so. That, I believe is the **purpose of government**, especially your local government. **It exists not merely to serve, but to enable; not only to provide services, but to provide the means for its citizens to better their lives.**

Kailangan natin makakain nang wasto at tama; kailangan mapangalagaan ang ating kalusugan; kailangan natin makapag-aral; kailangan natin ng maayos na tirahan; kailangan natin ng kaaya-ayang kapaligiran; kailangan natin maging ligtas.

Since I was very young my parents encouraged and inspired me to become a leader that not only seeks to serve, but **a leader who seeks to enable and empower.** They taught me that I have a duty and responsibility to help others achieve meaningful lives by helping to provide for their basic needs, as well as by **helping people become the best versions of themselves.** I was frequently reminded that **"to whom much is given, much is expected"**—and these are words that are close to my heart and guide my actions every single day.

When she was still with us, my beloved mother taught me many things, but one lesson that has left its imprint after all these years is this: **in doing one's obligation to society, purity of heart and intention is imperative because one cannot reconcile service with selfishness.** This, my friends, is at the core of my commitment to honest public service, or what we often refer to as **Good Governance**. Good Governance will guide our actions, and will allow us to accomplish what we plan to do for the city and its residents in the days ahead, specifically, our first hundred days in office.

Ano po ang balak natin tutukan sa unang isang daang araw?

We will focus on providing **service with a heart.** I intend to implement some ordinance-based and doable programs in my first 100 days. These include the improvements in the four priority areas: **housing, social services, education, and health**. Why? Because no matter how rich or developed Quezon City is, its government should always be judged by how it cares for those in its confines who have the least in life. *Kung umangat o umarangkada ang lungsod natin, sisiguradubin ko na walang maiiwan.*

For **housing**, we will act on the needs of the documented 188,549 informal settler families living in danger areas, open spaces and private properties in our city. *Hindi natin pwede hayaan na malagay sa alanganin ang buhay ng mga kababayan natin na walang maayos na bahay.* At present, our 36 Bistekvilles serve only 3,415 families, or not even 1% of the informal settler population. While we cannot build housing overnight, or even in 100 days, we will start by re-structuring the Housing, Community Development and Resettlement Department to provide free technical services and hasten the processes involved in land tenureship and housing. We will also craft a new shelter plan that will include guidelines in the selection of beneficiaries, various housing program models and PPPs.

In the area of **social services**, we shall: (1) increase burial assistance for indigent citizens from 10,000 pesos to a full 25,000 pesos; (2) raise medical assistance from the current 3,000 pesos to 5,000 pesos with attendant guidelines in the classification of clients; (3) comply and fund the provisions for Social Protection contained in our ordinances in support of our most vulnerable sectors and expand the number of beneficiaries of our educational assistance program; (4) establish a Solo Parents Welfare Office to cater to the growing number of Solo parents; and (5) establish a system in which financial assistance to fire victims shall be distributed from 3 to 5 days after validation by social workers instead of the usual 2 to 6 months. *Yung mga nangangailangan ng tulong ay makakaasa sa tulong ng City Hall; hindi po kayo pababayaan.*

In the area of **education**, we will mobilize our recently-discovered SEF funds to: (1) begin construction of the Bagbag National Integrated High School in Novaliches; (2) provide free eye, medical and dental check-ups for our public school students through PPPs with hospitals per district; and (3) establish a free TESDA Assessment Center for our senior high school tech-voc graduates and other skills training programs of the City to improve employment opportunities. *Gagawin natin ang lahat para matulungan ang kabataan ng QC na matupad ang kanilang pangarap sa buhay.*

*Sa **kalusugan** naman*, the QC Government will work to double the number of doctors in our health centers to ensure that there is one doctor per health center, instead of the current one doctor for every two or more health centers. We will also ensure that our LGU-run hospitals and health centers are well-stocked with medicines that are appropriate vis-a-vis the health profiles of the populations they serve. Consistent with an existing ordinance, *bibigyan po natin ng maintenance medicines ang ating mga seniors na may high blood o dyabitis, at bibigyan po natin ng libreng bakuna para sa flu at pulmonya.* We will likewise ensure the ready availability of prophylactic drugs for leptospirosis, especially this rainy season, as well as drugs for the growing number of documented cases of depression, dementia and other mental health problems. Free basic laboratory tests such as blood chemistry, x-ray, ultrasound, ECG, urine and stool exam in super health centers where these services and equipment are available will also be provided, and we will pour efforts into ensuring that Rosario Maclang Bautista Hospital in District 2 will be fully operational with adequate medicines and supplies.

Paano natin magagawa ang mga ito?

I am proposing four initiatives.

One, we need **information and accurate data** to better establish the needs and requirements of our citizens. *Kailangan po natin ng datos.* We need to know our city and our people backwards and forwards, inside and out, in order to be able to identify priorities by order of importance, to craft tailor-fitted programs and projects that best address needs, and to maximise the use of our resources and avoid leakage or wastage of public funds. Information, they say, is power; our policies, programs, and projects will be data-driven. *Pagdating sa kapakanan ng QC, hindi tayo pwede mangbula. Sabi nila maraming namamatay sa maling akala; totoo po yun.* Accurate data can mean the difference between a properly stocked government-run hospital, and one with inadequate supplies and equipment. We will work to make sure that everyone benefits from accurate, relevant information about our city.

Two, we will **strengthen internal governance and housekeeping**. *Aayusin natin ang City Hall.* In keeping with the principle of transparency and the DILG's request that we be a model for Good Governance, we will ask the City Council to pass the Freedom of Information Ordinance, making us the very first city to do so. We will also embark on a program to ensure that good and honest behaviour is incentivized and that acts considered as betrayals of public trust shall be penalized. We will immediately convene the Personnel Selection Board to fill up vacant plantilla positions and promote personnel based on meritocracy and not *palakasan*. We will put in place policies, protocols, and processes to make service delivery more convenient, faster and predictable, including online processing and payments when possible, in view of our plan towards a fully automated City within one year to lessen human intervention and discretion. We will work closely with the national government to ensure that we comply with the provisions of the new Ease of Doing Business Law. If decentralizing services to bring them closer to the people is feasible—either physically or virtually—we will do so as soon as possible.

Three, we will undertake **strategic planning and goal setting**. *Sabi ko nga kanina na* **we will serve with our heart**; **but to hit our goals we have to plan with our heads**. Ideally, all planning must be made within the first 100 days using the baseline data we have collected to establish our targets, objectives, and Key Performance Indicators. It is important to stick to the plans made by the City Development Council—as detailed in the City Development Plan and Annual Investment Plan—to avoid whimsical projects and to ensure that all projects and programs truly address the needs of our people.

Four, we will **listen to our citizens**. We will establish a feedback mechanism using avenues most comfortable to our people through which they can easily air their concerns and suggest improvements—a means by which we can also act on the issues important to our residents. Through this, we can also gauge the efficiency, effectiveness, and responsiveness of our City's different departments and agencies. *Kayo po ang bumubuhay sa Quezon City, at asahan nyo na papakinggan namin kayo para matugunan ang pangangailangan ninyo.*

I've shared with you our four priority areas for the first 100 days, as well as the four initiatives in order to get them done. However, now I would like to manage your expectations.

At this junction I believe we all should acknowledge and express our gratitude to Mayor Herbert Bautista for his service to the city—even at the expense of his personal life. Public service is always demanding, and I hope that with your less hectic schedule you will now have time to pursue what—or who—makes you happy. *Mayor, salamat po, at good luck.*

During his nine-year tenure in City Hall, Mayor Bautista focused much of his energy on the infrastructure development necessary to achieve inclusive growth and sustainable development in the city—the ultimate goal of any leader. In fact, from **January until the end of May this year**, around **275 infrastructure projects amounting to 5.6 billion pesos were awarded to contractors**. I will inherit many of these projects as they are either unfinished or have not yet started, and the City will honor these contracts as long as the awarding, implementation, and execution of these conform with existing government rules, regulations, and laws.

Consistent with my platform of good governance, my **first executive order will involve the creation of an Internal Audit Service under the Office of the Mayor to ensure that all processes and documents in QC are in order** based on Administrative Order No. 278, Series of 1992, and reiterated in Administrative Order No. 70 Series of 2003.

Good Governance, friends, begins with transparency and accountability. *Nagsisimula ito sa pagiging bukas at tapat sa inyo.* I believe that the people of Quezon City deserve to know the state of the local government and what we are doing to improve it, and this starts by informing you of the fiscal position of the city. The public has been informed that the city currently has around **26.5 billion pesos cash on hand and in bank as of May 31, 2019**. This figure may sound impressive, but it behooves us to clarify where these funds are and how they can be used. I have conferred with the City Treasurer, City Budget Officer, and City Accountant, and would like to inform the people of QC that 4.6 billion pesos of the 26.5 billion pesos mentioned earlier are Funds in Trust that are for very specific uses only, while around two billion pesos are tied to long-term investments—**leaving us with only 19.9 billion pesos remaining in the general fund**.

From this 19.9 billion pesos, we have to pay off all our obligations as of the end of May 2019 amounting to 14.3 billion pesos. This leaves us with **5.6 billion pesos to cover the second half of the year**. Assuming we are able to collect our expected revenues for the second half of the year amounting to 6.4 billion pesos, we will now have a total of **12 billion pesos to cover our projected expenses for the rest of 2019 pegged at 10.4 billion pesos. Thus, we estimate that the end of the year General Fund cash position will be roughly 1.6 billion pesos**.

For a city that has an area one-fourth of all of Metro Manila, and a **population of 3.1 million, this means a budget for the remainder of the year of only 516 pesos for every Quezon City resident**.

Yan po ang totoong kalagayan ng ating General Fund. At sa Office of the City Mayor naman, ang naiiwan na lamang na pondo para sa inprastruktura ay 53 million pesos. Sapat lang po ito para sa iisang 4-storey multi-purpose building.

Fortunately, I have some good news. The Commission on Audit has directed the City Government, through the Local School Board and City Treasurer, to terminate the Special Education Fund time deposit amounting to 1.3 billion pesos. This allows us to mobilize more funds to be used exclusively for the education of Quezon City youth. Thus from the original 1.6 billion pesos on hand, we now have about 2.9 billion pesos. *Hindi po tayo pababayaan ng Diyos.*

Still, given the size of our City and the vast needs of our people, we cannot and should not count on the grace of God alone. There is still a need for us to practice prudence and wisdom in the choice of our projects moving forward in order to maximize our limited resources so that these last until the end of the year. The 1.6 billion pesos will require a Supplemental Budget Ordinance from the City Council and as early as now, I enjoin the 21st Quezon City Council to convene immediately to enact this as well as other ordinances to ensure the success of our first hundred days.

Mga kaibigan, marami pa kaming kayang gawin sa loob ng 100 na araw ngunit pabintulutan nalang ninyo kaming sorpresahin kayo. Iuulat ko ang lahat ng ito, kung saan ako nagtagumpay at saan ako nagkulang, sa Oktubre sa SOCA.

Ang pinakamahalaga para sa akin ngayon ay ang pagpapasensya ninyo. I really wanted to have had more elbowroom to do more projects and programs during the first six months of my term because you all deserve the best that your elected officials can give. *Ngunit katulad ng nabanggit ko, may mga limitasyon, na alam ko naman na sa pag-unawa ninyo ay malalagpasan natin.*

Again, please let me reiterate that I am greatly humbled by the trust and confidence you have bestowed upon me. It is a great honor that I will treasure with all of my heart. As my husband always tells me, we may have to forego family vacations, date nights, and time with our child because of my new responsibilities—but how many people in this world are given by the Lord the rarest and most precious of opportunities to make a difference in the lives of millions?

Ulitin ko po: to whom much is given, much is expected. *Tanggap ko po na malaki po ang responsibilidad na ibinigay sa akin ng mga taga Quezon City, at malaki ang hamon na tangat ang antas ng pamumuhay ng mga nakatira dito.*

As the Lord says, there is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens:

This is not just my time, this is OUR time— the time for Quezon City to claim its place among the best, the most progressive, and most liveable cities in the country.

With the help of Vice Mayor Gian Sotto, our City Council, our Department Heads, the people of Quezon City, and by the grace of God, we hope to accomplish all these and much, much more.

Maraming salamat po at mabuhay ang Quezon City!

