



AUSTIN J. TYLEC

AMERICA 250 TIME CAPSULE CEREMONY

"Opening the Past. Preserving the Future."

Remarks of Mayor Austin Tylec

Thursday, July 23, 2026 | 11:00 a.m.

North Tonawanda City Hall | 216 Payne Avenue

Time Capsule to Be Opened in 2076

Hello, North Tonawanda—in 2076.

And good morning to everyone standing here with us in 2026.

I have to admit, this has been one of the hardest speeches I have ever had to write.

Usually, when you give a speech as mayor, you know who you are talking to. It is the people standing in front of you.

Today is different.

Today, I am also speaking to people who probably have not even been born yet.

About a month ago, many of us gathered outside the North Tonawanda Public Library to watch our Department of Public Works employees dig up a time capsule that had been buried fifty years earlier.

I do not think any of us realized how difficult that was going to be.

We stood there in the heat for more than an hour while our DPW crew kept digging, prying and pulling until they finally got the capsule out of the ground.

To be clear, the DPW employees did all the actual work. Myself and the other elected officials mostly stood around, watched, offered occasional commentary and waited for the appropriate moment to take a picture.

So, in many ways, it was a very traditional government project.

But when that capsule finally came out of the ground, something felt different.

Fifty years ago, people in this community carefully chose what they wanted to leave for the future. They collected photographs, documents, newspapers and pieces of everyday life. Then they placed everything into a container, sealed it and trusted that someday, people they might never meet would care enough to open it.

I say “might never meet” because I am still on the fence about whether I have another fifty years left in me.

Should I happen to be here when this is opened, I hope someone remembers to invite me—and provides a chair because ill probably need it.

Those residents in 1976 did not know who the mayor would be when their capsule was opened. They did not know what North Tonawanda would look like or what the world would become.

And now, somehow, we are the people they were waiting for.

That realization created a problem for me:

What exactly am I supposed to say to someone living fifty years from now?

Do I talk about politics? Budgets? Grants? Infrastructure? Council meetings?

Will any of that matter to you?

Maybe.

But I think it is more important to tell you what this moment actually felt like.

My name is Austin Tylec. When this capsule was buried, I had recently been elected to my second term as mayor. When I was first elected, I became the youngest mayor in North Tonawanda’s history.

Whether that record still exists in 2076, I sincerely hope someone younger has broken it.

North Tonawanda had been very busy in the years leading up to this moment.

We secured record levels of grant funding for our community.

We made a record amount of investments in roads, water systems, public facilities and other infrastructure that people rely on every day.

We strengthened the North Tonawanda City Market, which had recently been voted the number-one farmers market in the nation.

We are in the middle of constructing a new aquatic facility at Payne Park, an investment of nearly \$10 million. By the time you read this, you may have already replaced it with something even better.

I just hope you kept the giant water tipping bucket as a memento.

We worked to strengthen our local economy, bringing hundreds of new jobs and new places for people to live into the city.

We restored stability to our city finances, moved long-delayed projects forward and took on challenges that many people believed could not be solved.

We did not fix everything. No administration ever does.

But we worked hard, challenged expectations and refused to accept the idea that North Tonawanda's best days were behind it.

None of that work belonged to one person or one administration.

I was incredibly fortunate to serve alongside department heads and City employees who genuinely cared about North Tonawanda.

They stayed late, answered calls, repaired waterlines, plowed streets, maintained parks, balanced budgets, organized events, responded to emergencies and helped residents who sometimes did not know where else to turn.

Perhaps robots handle all of that work for you now.

Although, knowing municipal government, I imagine a City employee still has to come out whenever the robot breaks.

Our employees did not do this work because it was glamorous.

They did it because this was their home, and they believed it was worth fighting for.

That is something I hope never changes.

This speech is not intended to be a political victory lap. Politicians are usually capable of creating those without much encouragement.

It is also not meant to pretend that everything was perfect.

People still argued about nearly everything.

And no matter what we announced, improved, repaired or built, people online usually had an opinion before we had even finished explaining it.

Perhaps the internet is a calmer and more reasonable place in 2076.

That may be the least believable prediction in this entire speech.

We were also still waiting for flying cars.

For decades, people had promised us that flying cars were right around the corner. Yet in 2026, we were still driving regular cars on regular roads—and, yes, people were still complaining about the roads.

I imagine that fifty years from now, the biggest complaint will still be about the roads.

Or perhaps there will be too many flying cars in the sky, too much traffic over people's houses and complaints that all the vehicles look like giant mechanical birds.

No matter how advanced society becomes, I am confident that someone will still contact the Mayor's Office about it.

The country had also just stopped producing pennies when this capsule was buried.

By 2076, nickels are probably gone too, and the phrase "just my two cents" probably sounds like something only an old person would say.

Although I suppose I may be that old person by then.

I have no idea what your world looks like.

Maybe City Hall is still standing exactly where it was when we buried this capsule.

Maybe it has been completely restored.

Maybe it has been replaced.

Maybe you found this capsule underneath a building, a park or something none of us could have imagined.

In 2026, we were investing significant resources into repairing and preserving this City Hall. We believed it was worth doing because history only survives when people make the choice to protect it.

Not every building can remain unchanged forever, but every community should remember where it came from as it decides where it is going.

I also wonder what the rest of North Tonawanda looks like.

Is the City Market still filled with farmers, vendors and families?

Are our parks still busy?

Are people still gathering along the Erie Canal and the Niagara River?

And what happened to Tonawanda Island?

In 2026, we were just beginning to move forward with the first mixed-use residential development at 78 Bridge Street and working toward a larger vision that could eventually represent nearly half a billion dollars in investment.

Did the island become everything people dreamed it could be?

Did it create new homes, businesses, public spaces and opportunities?

Or did future generations come up with an even better idea?

I hope the projects we started continued to serve you. I hope you improved upon them, replaced the things that no longer worked and had the courage to begin projects of your own.

Mostly, though, I hope North Tonawanda still feels like home.

Buildings change.

Roads change.

Technology changes.

Mayors certainly change.

But what has always made this city special is not any one building, project, administration or elected official.

It is the people who show up.

The people who open businesses, raise families, coach children, support their neighbors, volunteer, serve the public, preserve our history and care enough to imagine something better.

That is the real story we are placing into the ground today.

We are not burying this capsule because 2026 was perfect.

We are burying it because it was ours.

These were our challenges, our accomplishments, our disagreements, our celebrations and our hopes.

We did not know exactly what the future would bring, but we believed there was a future here worth investing in.

So, to the people opening this capsule in 2076: thank you for taking a few minutes to look back at us.

I hope some of our predictions made you laugh.

I hope some of our worries now seem small.

I hope some of our biggest dreams came true.

And I hope one thing remains exactly the same: that the people of North Tonawanda still believe their city's best days are ahead of it.

When you finish looking through the items we have left behind, I hope you continue this tradition.

Fill another capsule with your photographs, your stories, your technology, your memories, your challenges and your hopes.

Then bury it for the people who will stand here fifty years after you.

Because history is not only something we inherit.

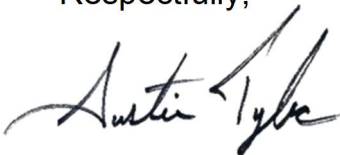
It is something we create—and something we leave behind.

From all of us in 2026: take care of this city. Make it your own. Leave it better than you found it.

And before you bury the next time capsule, please make sure our DPW employees—or your robots—will actually be able to get it out of the ground.

Thank you to those with us today, and to those hopefully reading this 50 years from now.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Austin Tylec". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping initial "A".

Austin Tylec

Mayor