

**STATE OF THE COUNTY ADDRESS
OAKLAND COUNTY EXECUTIVE L. BROOKS PATTERSON
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COMMISSIONER'S AUDITORIUM**

OAKLAND COUNTY: LEADERSHIP THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

Good evening, everyone.

Let me begin this evening by thanking all of you for joining me as I report on the State of the County.

A lot has happened since my last report, and I would like to review the progress my Administration has made this past year on a number of important issues which affect county government and the 1.1 million residents who live within the 910 square miles we call Oakland County.

In looking back over the past 12 months, you know you must be doing something right when a prestigious organization like the National Association of Counties recognizes your accomplishments. Such was the case in 1995 when Oakland County government walked off with six NACO Achievement Awards.

There's one award-winning effort I'm particularly proud of, and that's the ongoing positive impact of the Oakland County Business Roundtable. I established the Business Roundtable in early 1993. It was comprised of business leaders, educators and government officials - some 125 in total - and charged by me to come up with strategies that would help keep Oakland County - the third wealthiest county in America - economically competitive as we prepare for the ever increasing challenges of the next millennium.

I asked my Director of Community and Economic Development, Ken Rogers, to assume the responsibility for directing this project. In a word, he was outstanding in this role.

The Roundtable broke into 12 subcommittees and went to work. In February of 1995 the Roundtable reported back to me with 137 recommendations to hone Oakland County's competitive edge.

My promise to these hard working and dedicated members of the Roundtable was that their work would not simply be bound up in some final report and put on a shelf to gather dust. Rather, I would immediately go to work, and with the support of my very capable staff, implement their proposals as quickly as possible.

I'm delighted to report tonight that of the 137 recommendations submitted to me, we now have 19 projects up and running. Implemented. And my best estimate, by the time the annual meeting of the Roundtable rolls around in June, we will be able to report to the entire Roundtable membership that we have fulfilled 43 to 45 of their recommendations.

You may find of interest some of the suggestions which have already been completed.

One of them is the much heralded "One Stop Shop" for business development here in Oakland County. This first- of-its-kind full service center opened its doors to business in late August. The center offers businesses everything they need to succeed in today's extremely challenging marketplace.

When you walk through the front door of the "One Stop Shop" you gain immediate access to a variety of services: site location assistance, financing, small business support, job training, market research, site design, architectural assistance, census and economic statistics, and much more.

We have detailed data on all 440,000 Oakland County land parcels, computerized for easy access. We have aerial maps of all of Oakland County dating back to the mid-50's. We're the only county in Michigan that has a direct

link to the DNR. What used to take six to eight weeks for information regarding possible contaminated sites can now be provided in 30 seconds.

A subcommittee of the Roundtable explored Oakland County's opportunities in the import/export arena. Oakland County has 425 foreign-owned corporations from 22 nations. When you look at the total foreign investment in the State of Michigan, over 60 percent of this is in Oakland County.

As a result of the foreign investment and the presence of foreign corporations in Oakland County, our businesses lay claim to 44 percent of all the state's export activity.

Because of the emerging import/export business, it was only logical that Oakland County would open up an Export Assistance Center...which we did in September of 1995.

Located on our county campus, in the Oakland Pointe Office Complex that we purchased during 1995, the Export Assistance Center houses representatives from the federal government (specifically from the Department of Commerce and the SBA), representatives from the Jobs Commission in Lansing, and representatives from Oakland County's Development and Planning Department.

For the first time in America federal, state and local officials are working in concert in one location, under one roof, to enhance the export opportunities for businesses located in this region.

If you are a businessman or businesswoman in Oakland County, or for that matter in this region, and are looking to expand your markets abroad, we have a service available for you free of charge at 250 Elizabeth Lake Road. Please come visit us.

AIRPORT/CUSTOMS

When I talk about the international community that has invested in Oakland County, it is a natural segue to my next comment.

Every week, if not every day, planes from all over the world take off and land at Oakland/Pontiac Airport in Waterford Township. You may be surprised to know that our local airport is among the 30 busiest airports in the world, and the third busiest in the nation for corporate and business air traffic.

Until recently, many of the foreign flights coming to Oakland County were required to land at other airports to first "clear customs," and then re-start their engines and fly on to their final destination, the Oakland/Pontiac Airport.

The reason for this costly inconvenience was due to the fact that Oakland/Pontiac did not have a full-time customs officer on duty at our location.

So for the past two and one-half years I have waged a full court press in the halls of Congress to secure customs service at our airport. With the support of Michigan's congressional delegation, led most notably by the outstanding efforts of Congressman Joe Knollenberg, the way was cleared for full-time customs service at the Oakland/Pontiac Airport. It literally took an Act of Congress, signed by the President in 1995; but beginning in January of 1996 custom officers are now located at the Oakland/Pontiac Airport from 12:00 noon until 8:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

The presence of customs will greatly enhance our ability to better serve our international business clients who will now find it more convenient to do business here in Oakland County.

Which leads me to the next point: because the Oakland/Pontiac Airport is the aviation gateway to the world, and further because it creates a \$100 million economic impact county-wide for Oakland, and with the presence of customs we

now anticipate conservatively an additional \$10 million of economic activity will occur, I am tonight calling for the re-naming of the Oakland/Pontiac Airport to reflect what it has now truly become, namely the "Oakland County International Airport."

The Chairman of the Airport Committee, Commissioner Donn Wolf, wholeheartedly agrees with this proposed change.

Seven of the fourteen other airports in Michigan, which have full-time customs service, use "International" in their titles. Certainly a county that represents 44 percent of the state's entire export activity deserves no less a designation of its airport.

GIS

A year ago in my State of the County Address I announced that we would be launching two very important programs: a Geographic Information System (often times referred to as GIS) and an Enhanced Access System. Let me update you on where we stand with regard to both of these innovative and forward looking projects.

First, GIS: As you may know, the centerpiece of the GIS system is the formation of a "base map" of Oakland County's 61 communities. This is a very time consuming, labor intensive costly conversion from paper base maps into an unquestionably superior computerized format. It takes about four months to convert 35,000 parcels of land, and with 440,000 parcels of land in Oakland County, you can see that this effort is a long-term commitment on the part of Oakland County to upgrade its information database. But the end result will make it all worth while. Once the maps are converted, utilizing state-of-the-art

technology, we will have a base map with a degree of precision and accuracy heretofore impossible to create.

These computerized maps will be invaluable and the uses of such maps are only limited by our creativity. Some of the computer programs we have looked at contain up to 136 levels of functional applications that could be utilized by business, government, and the public at large. Examples of "data overlay" would include the ability to precisely locate utility lines, sewers, roads, wells, underground water flow, boundary lines, easements, and so forth. The next phase of GIS will be to develop such a software program that provides for overlay.

ENHANCED ACCESS

The second ambitious program announced last year is well under way. I speak of the effort known as "Enhanced Access." As I said last year, the County itself is sitting on a veritable reservoir of information that could be made more accessible to the private sector through the use of technology. Computer access from remote locations into court files, access to real estate information contained in the Register of Deeds Office, access to tax files and tax information in the Treasurer's Office, and much more, is the kind of data that can be brought on line.

Robert Daddow, my Director of Management and Budget, who is the point man for my Administration in both GIS and Enhanced Access, has literally held scores of meetings with community leaders, elected officials, potential users of the system, think tanks, and editorial boards who ultimately will pass judgement on this effort.

This is a new approach to better serve the public through technology. You can skip the line at the counter and use your modem from work. Instead of sending a clerk to the Treasurer's Office to rummage through files, you can electronically

rummage from your desk top. For this electronically enhanced access you would pay a small service fee.

I must quickly add, however, if you do not wish to avail yourself of this service, there is nothing that would preclude you from coming to the various departments and physically checking for the information you wish to obtain.

When these two programs, GIS and Enhanced Access, finally come on line and are fully operational near the end of this decade, it will only further bolster Oakland County's international reputation as a high-tech leader among governments across the United States of America.

COMPUTERIZATION

As I've said many times during my many speeches around the county - and I am wont to speak about three to four times a week - I spread the gospel of Oakland County according to Brooks Patterson. But everybody knows that Brooks Patterson didn't do anything by himself. Behind me are my Deputies and Directors, my Managers and Supervisors, my fellow Elected Officials and their staffs, and the nearly 4,000 employees who make up the Oakland County work force.

They do outstanding work for the citizens of this county, and they do their jobs efficiently, professionally, and when the opportunity arises, with a smile on their face. I can't say enough about these fine men and women.

For example, did you know on pay day the employees can come to work in casual clothes, but for that so-called "privilege" they put a dollar in the "Jean Jar" spread throughout the various county departments? Those dollars add up month after month, and do you know what the employees do with the money they donate on Casual Day? They give it to the needy at Christmas time. And this year

Oakland County employees gave away \$18,000 to eight different charities that serve the needy and the poor during the holiday season!

Not only are they efficient and professional, but they have a big heart as well. (And by the way, in addition to the \$18,000 to local charities, the employees, from the Casual Day fund, sent a thousand dollars to the victims of the Oklahoma bombing.)

I am proud of the people that I work with in county government. Because they work so hard for all of you, in turn I try to give them as much support as I can so that they can do their job better. This includes arming them with the best tools available.

I am delighted to report to you tonight that we have done just that. In 1993, there were less than 200 personal computers in use across Oakland County's 4,000 person work force. Today, however, there are more than 2,000 p.c.'s and user imaging work stations in the hands of our employees, bringing to more than 5000 the number of devices in use on Oakland County's information technology network. Over that same time we've logged more than 50,000 hours of employee training as well.

DEFINED CONTRIBUTION PLAN

Nineteen hundred and ninety-five marked further cost-cutting measures in county government. December 31 was the deadline for employees to switch over to the new Defined Contribution Plan. Out of 2,955 eligible employees, 1,233 jumped through the window and signed up for this new retirement program. These employees will benefit, but so will Oakland County. The conversion to the DC Plan will save the county approximately \$3.4 million this year and a total of more than \$24 million by the end of this decade.

We also completed the Deferred Retirement Buy-out Program in 1995. You may recall that I addressed this unique program last year when I explained that we were prepared to give 400 previously employed Oakland County workers an immediate lump sum redemption of their retirement dollars in exchange for surrendering any claim on future medical benefits. The program was extremely successful: the end result was that Oakland County reduced its liability to the employees health care trust by \$9 million in one year. Further, the County will be spared the obligation to contribute approximately \$796,000 annually to the health care fund for the next 30 years - a savings in the neighborhood of \$23 million.

PRIVATIZATION

Because there are some things the private sector can do better and more cost effectively than government, we have turned to privatization in many areas. For example, during my first two years in office we privatized the medical, cafeteria, and janitorial services at the Medical Care Facility. This was followed by the privatization of the Sheriff's Civil Division and the Court Summons Services.

We looked deeper to find additional ways in which to cut costs through outsourcing. We found that operating our own body shop out of Central Garage was an expensive luxury we could no longer afford. It would cost us approximately \$200,000 alone just to bring the bump shop up to EPA standards - this for a facility that only averages about two repair jobs per week.

As a result, we made the decision to privatize the bump shop operation in 1995, and are now in the process of awarding contracts to outside firms to perform this function. Getting out of the body repair business allowed the county to eliminate two positions in the Garage, in addition to saving \$200,000 we won't have to spend to bring the bump shop up to EPA standards.

When you factor in the other steps that have been taken to cut costs in the county's vehicle fleet operation - the elimination of 91 vehicles - the outsourcing of all oil changes, and the implementation of a new fleet replacement program, the total cumulative cost savings now add up to \$2.5 million.

Another privatization challenge was successfully met in 1995 when we converted the outdated radio communications system known as "O"COM from its 450 MHz to a new and technologically superior 800 MHz system. Through this conversion and privatization, we were able to eliminate the need for a centrally located dispatcher. More importantly, instead of paramedics in the field going through an "O"COM operator, they can now talk directly to the hospitals, thereby saving precious time which can be extremely valuable in life and death situations.

The old radio system had deteriorated to the point where the signal covered 90 percent of the land mass just 75 percent of the time. The new system covers 100 percent of the land mass 99 percent of the time. Though there was heated debate throughout the privatization process, we ended up with a system which successfully balances the diverse needs of the four major players in the drama: the emergency room doctors, hospital administrators, service providers, and the County.

But we're not stopping there. We are now in the process of researching other opportunities for privatization: for example, our supply operations. Privatization may be a much more cost effective method to secure our food for prisoners, or acquire office supplies and janitorial supplies, as well as microfilming. In addition we are exploring the feasibility of an outside hardware and software vendor for a computer system in the County Clerk/Register of Deeds Office.

As I have said before, if the private sector can do it more cost effectively and more efficiently, then government ought to get out of the business.

SMART

In 1995 the citizens of Oakland County answered our call to keep the Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation in business by overwhelmingly approving a one-third mill tax to bail out this debt ridden system.

In return for that vote of confidence, we promised to reorganize SMART (as it's known) into a community-based transportation system that will be cost effective and enjoy a wide range of public support and utilization.

I am happy to report to you tonight that in the past year we have made extraordinary progress in making SMART a smart transportation alternative for residents.

With the help of local communities, government leaders and concerned citizens, we have redesigned routes, eliminated nonproductive routes, and added new service.

Eight new bus lines are up and running, adding 200 miles of new coverage which serve an additional 9,000 businesses that employ 150,000 people.

The SMART bus fleet has been downsized by replacing the older 40-foot large buses with 86 of the newer and more compact 29-foot buses which will improve fuel efficiency and provide greater maneuverability.

The transit tax the voters approved expires in three years, giving us a small window of opportunity to turn the bus system around. But we will do it because effective and reliable bus transportation has wide-ranging implications for the future economic well-being of Oakland County.

HONORABLE MENTION

A number of other significant events have occurred in the past year, too many to talk about at length tonight, but still worthy of a quick mention.

The Employee Suggestion Program is one such successful effort. Since the program was launched in 1993, our employees have submitted and we have implemented suggestions that now save the taxpayers in excess of \$2 million annually.

Another effort is the highly successful project undertaken by our Economic Development Department involving an insert we place in the Wall Street Journal. My staff sells advertising, and for each page of advertising we sell we get a corresponding page of editorial copy. The Wall Street Journal insert this year was bigger and better than ever - 20 pages, compared to 12 pages in the preceding two years. It is one of the largest inserts ever in the Wall Street Journal and the only one from any government in the United States of America.

This annual project has become a good example of an effective partnership between government and business. Through this effort we market Oakland County and the opportunities to do business with and in Oakland County in 19 states and the Province of Ontario.

CAMPUS IMPROVEMENT

Nineteen hundred and ninety-five was a busy year for the talented men and women who work for the Engineering and Maintenance Division of Facilities Management. Those familiar with our campus will see many significant improvements.

In lightening speed they renovated the main floor of the Executive Office Building and got the "One Stop Shop" up and running in less than four months.

New signage was installed around the complex last year which should make it easier for visitors to get to where they want to go. Future plans call for replacement of the large maps at the north and south entrances to our campus.

If you are a frequent visitor to our main courthouse building, you can't help but notice all the work that's been going on at the north entrance. A large circular lobby is being constructed which will provide courthouse security with the room needed to accommodate checkpoint equipment and provide easier access into the courthouse for the general public.

The judges and staff of the 52nd District Court - Division 1 - got a new home early in 1995. They moved from their old building in Walled Lake to a new facility in Novi. Now the old District Court building is being renovated and this April we will open our first "West Oakland County Service Center."

The new Center will house employees from our Health Division, Probate Court, Juvenile Court, Veteran's Affairs, and Friend of the Court. This convenient location for some of the county's busiest functions will make it easier for residents in the western part of this county to conduct their business.

SPECIAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

All too often we measure the success of something in the abstract. We talk about a program or policy saving "x" number of dollars. Sometimes we lose sight that behind such accomplishments there is the human factor.

I am proud of the record this Administration has achieved over the past three years. But success would not have been possible without reliable people, the men and women of county government who toil in the trenches day in and day out, putting forth the maximum effort - many times going above and beyond what is required of them.

People like John Almstadt, the unsung hero of the county's Employment & Training Division who has presided over some pretty amazing accomplishments, despite operating with a reduced staff. Since January, 1993 Employment & Training has been awarded \$15 million to train economically disadvantaged individuals. They have met or exceeded all seven performance standards for employment and training programs under the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), found unsubsidized jobs for 80 percent of the economically disadvantaged adults and dislocated workers who were enrolled in JTPA training programs, and created seven full service career centers that have consolidated, streamlined, and improved the number of job training programs and services in Oakland County.

Then there is Shirla Kugler, who with the help of her talented and dedicated staff, has been able to reduce costs at the Medical Care Facility. As a result of her efforts, the county subsidy for the 120 bed Medical Care Facility has gone from \$2 million per year down to zero, a fantastic turnaround that is certainly worthy of recognition and praise.

These are just two of the many outstanding individuals who are representative of the kind of employees we have working at all levels of county government. I thank each and every one of them personally for the job they are doing on behalf of the citizens of Oakland County.

INEQUITIES

As I report to you on the State of the County tonight, I would be less than candid if I said everything in 1995 was a home run.

In an area where we were less than successful was the leveling of the playing field as we compete against other counties for return of our tax dollars from Lansing.

I talked about it last year and it bears mention again tonight: year in and year out, the rest of Michigan benefits at Oakland County's expense. My friends, we are seriously losing the funding war in Lansing.

As the state's largest provider of tax dollars, we contribute \$1.9 billion annually to the State of Michigan. Yet we rank 79th out of the 83 counties in terms of tax dollars returned. That's a negative spending gap of almost \$734 million!

What kind of funding inequities exist you may ask? Well, for example, why should the taxpayers of Oakland County pay for their probate court, their district courts, their circuit courts, when the same courts in Detroit and Wayne County have their total tab, in excess of \$65 million, picked up by the state?

In essence, the State is using some of Oakland County's tax dollars to pay for courts in another county, and yet gives no support to the most generous taxpaying county of all, Oakland County.

Another example? Why should Oakland County be reimbursed for a myriad of social service programs at an average \$515.25 when the state average reimbursement is \$977.99? Oakland County taxpayers are directly subsidizing social service programs in other counties to our own deprivation.

In the area of mental health reimbursement for example, why in 1994, should our per capita reimbursement be \$94.25 when the same patients in Wayne County are reimbursed at a rate of \$177.82 per capita? And the disparity is expected to widen for fiscal year '96.

On and on it goes!

Oakland County is the State of Michigan's cash cow. Our 40,000 businesses generate an annual payroll of \$19.8 billion - and those payrolls are taxed by the state.

Oakland County generates retail sales greater than 17 states - and those retail sales are taxed by the state.

Further, the state acknowledges that 49,000 new tax paying jobs will be created this year in Oakland County -that's half of all the new jobs in the State of Michigan. Well, if all these numbers are true - and they are - the State of Michigan ought to be in love with Oakland County. Instead of picking our pocket they should be kissing us on the cheek.

The fact is, we are a donor county to the extent of \$734 million! That's \$734 million we don't get back that could be put into programs here at the local level. What programs?

Perhaps with \$734 million, or a portion thereof being returned to Oakland County, we could seriously address the jail overcrowding crisis which is about to result in an emergency declaration.

Perhaps we could construct a new home for our forensic family. For the past 30 years the Medical Examiner staff has been forced to deal with an increasing caseload in cramped quarters that have never once been renovated. A new home is long overdue, especially if the Oakland County Medical Examiner is to continue providing top quality service to the communities of this county.

With a more equitable distribution of our tax dollars perhaps we could help fund revitalization efforts along the 8 Mile corridor, or a similar undertaking being studied by the Woodward Corridor Task Force.

Or if there wasn't a worthwhile program to fund, we could do what the taxpayers should expect us to do, that's reduce the tax burden on our residents.

Frankly, my friends, the problem is that some people in Lansing don't even know that there is a problem. Recently, an obsequious state bureaucrat with the

Department of Management & Budget publicly challenged my figures on the \$734 million spending gap.

She was quoted in a local newspaper article as follows:

"An official with the state's Department of Management & Budget, doubts Patterson's figures.

Where are these numbers coming from?" asked spokeswoman Maureen McNulty. "How are they figuring them?"

"McNulty said the state doesn't have numbers comparing what individual counties pay and what they receive. And she doubts if Oakland County does either."

Well, if Ms. McNulty had bothered to check, which obviously she did not, she would have found that the exact numbers we used were on pages 4 and 67 of this report published by the Senate Fiscal Agency dated March, 1995 entitled Estimated State Spending and State Collections by County - Fiscal Year 1992 - 93. For the record, the publication that I have just held up is produced annually by Ms. McNulty's employer, the State of Michigan.

Ms. McNulty wasn't satisfied in publicly questioning our position, she had to pile it on with the following quote. "I'll sell you a bridge in Brooklyn if that's the case."

What we have here, folks, is a lady with a bad attitude. Her comments, unfortunately, reflect a perception which seems to be all too prevalent in many parts of the state: that Oakland County's streets are lined with gold...when in fact they're lined with pot holes...and if we had our damn money back we could fill them!

If Oakland County is the cash cow for the state - and I believe we can rightfully make that claim - then give us a greener pasture to graze in and we'll

produce more milk. But don't cut our grass, bale it up, and give it away to some other dairy farm, it will only hurt the cow that's leading the parade.

Attaining equity for Oakland County taxpayers will be a fight and a struggle that will take years to achieve. But as you can see, the first shots have been fired.

THE FUTURE

Before I close tonight I want to take a quick look at some of the projects, besides the equity question, that will keep us busy in 1996. In the coming year we will put the finishing touches on a plan to consolidate the Budget and the Accounting Divisions into a new division called "Financial Services." This \$2.5 million project has already resulted in elimination of three positions and a savings to the taxpayers of \$125,000. A fourth position is being considered for deletion with an additional savings of \$70,000.

Over the next 18 months we also plan to implement a new financial system which will replace our current outdated 23 year old system which is labor intensive, provides little documentation, prone to break down, and is rampant with duplication of effort.

We will switch over to the new system in September of 1997, and at the same time usher in a new fiscal year which will end on September 30, instead of on December 31. These changes will help to make Oakland County government more streamlined, more efficient, and more accountable.

In 1996, Oakland County will again demonstrate its leadership through the use of technology by going on the Internet and establishing an interactive job application process available to the public 24 hours a day, seven days a week, over the "World Wide Webb" - the information super highway!

Anybody around the world with access to the Internet will be able to apply directly for employment with the County.

Nineteen hundred and ninety-six will also be the year when legislation is introduced in Lansing by Senator Michael Bouchard that would allow Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties to keep their hotel/motel taxes in the county of origin. You may recall that in 1986 the "Convention Facility Development Tax" was passed, imposing a graduated tax on hotel/motel rooms in Detroit, Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties. The money was earmarked to pay the bonds for the Cobo Hall expansion. Oakland County's contribution for this debt retirement program in 1994 alone was approximately \$4.5 million.

The argument in 1986 was that the hotels and motels in the metropolitan area outside of Detroit would experience additional activity as a result of conventions in Cobo Hall. This simply has not occurred.

Whether that argument in 1986 was valid or not is not the point. Detroit today is a far different city than it was in 1986. The Mayor of the City of Detroit, the Honorable Dennis Archer, said last week in his State of the City Address, "that decades of decline are over. Detroit is on a new course of growth and opportunity." As evidence of the city's progress toward becoming the "City of Tomorrow," the Mayor underscored that Detroit now has 82 economic development projects under way with a total investment value of \$2.2 billion.

The Mayor added that for the first time in this decade the city actually closed its books with a surplus and is on target to do the same this year.

With the \$734 million negative spending gap that I addressed a moment ago, coupled with the impressive turnaround in the fortunes of the City of Detroit, I think I can safely say that it's now time to end the unnecessary subsidy of Cobo

Hall and return the tax dollars raised through the hotel/motel taxes to the county of origin.

I would propose that the \$4.5 million in taxes that would be returned to Oakland County be set aside in a Strategic Development Fund to be used for qualified public works programs and projects that are on the drawing board today, but are underfunded. Such programs as revitalizing the Woodward Corridor certainly would be at the top of my list.

CLOSE

In closing tonight, let me just say what a privilege it has been to serve as Oakland County Executive for the past three years. It has been an exciting and a rewarding experience and I look forward to the final year of my first four year term with great anticipation.

I would be remiss tonight if I did not acknowledge the significant contributions of those who have worked side-by-side throughout the year with my Administration. First, to the 25 members of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners who have supported our efforts to make Oakland County government more efficient and more cost effective, I thank you.

My appreciation as well to my fellow elected county-wide officials who have been asked from time to time to bite the bullet to put Oakland County on the sound financial footing it enjoys today.

And to the Directors, Managers, and especially the rank-and-file employees who are the backbone of county government, I send along my special congratulations to you for a job well done. Your effort, in some cases your sacrifices, have enabled Oakland County to fulfill its destiny as one of America's premier counties.

We in government, in an absolute partnership with the private sector, have built a county where business will find a friendly environment in which to grow and prosper...where mothers and fathers will find quality schools in which to educate their children and prepare them for the future...where families can enjoy an enriched quality of life rarely found in such bounty anywhere in the United States.

Recently in a January 21, 1996 editorial, Oakland Press Editor Neil Munro was referring to the enviable statistics that Oakland County has amassed. Mr. Munro said, "The County has economic and quality of life numbers any other location would kill for." He then cited some of the very numbers that I have shared with you this evening.

Mr. Munro then capped off his editorial, quite appropriately I thought, by saying: "If you just moved here and didn't know all the (statistics), be advised that you've fallen into a pot of honey. Feel free to brag."

Well, pardon me if I bragged too much tonight about Oakland County. But as you can see, I'm darn proud of what you and I and the rest of our fellow citizens have built here. And as long as I'm Oakland County Executive I'll do my best to keep it that way.

Thank you, and good night.

**L. BROOKS PATTERSON
OAKLAND COUNTY EXECUTIVE**