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Pursing Excellence: Raising the Bar across the City of Canton

CANTON, OHIO—Mayor Healy delivered his seventh State of the City address Tuesday evening. The speech focused on raising the bar and establishing a **Standard of Excellence** in every department of the city. Mayor Healy introduced his leadership team which is made up of over 30 individuals throughout numerous departments and stated that this is the most talented group of leaders the city has experienced during his term of office.

The speech itself highlighted the city's strong financial and continuously improving outlook. The mayor referenced the city's all-time high income tax collection dollars and paying down the city's debt as financial highlights. In spite of the \$6 million decrease in state funding support, the mayor stated, **"the city's finances are stronger than they have been in a decade."**

Mayor Healy then turned his attention to the four pillars that make a strong city: Economy, Education, Community, and Safety. When addressing the city's current economy, he addressed several key highlights showing that Canton has a growing economy, which include the declining unemployment rate and numerous new companies bringing jobs to our community. Most importantly, Healy stated, **"VXI announced they will be hiring an additional 650 employees by the end of spring.** With these additional hires, VXI Global Solutions, Inc. will become one of the city's top five employers."

In the second pillar, Education, the mayor pointed to Stark State's success with its expansion in downtown Canton. This expansion will focus on the oil and gas industry. Stark State anticipates serving thousands of students at this new downtown campus.

Healthy, attractive neighborhoods encompass the third of Healy's four pillars; in which the mayor addressed the city's blighted properties. The city has torn down over 1,000 blighted structures since 2008 with plans to tear down an additional 250 structures over the next two years.

But clearly the highlight of the 2014 State of the City was the fourth pillar of a strong city: Safety, when the mayor swore in 35 new members of the city's safety forces—the most that have ever been sworn in at one time—which included **18 new police officers and 17 new firefighters.** This was the most diverse class hired in over 25 years, including 10 veterans.

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