

Mayor's State of the Town Address

2016 – Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce Christmas Luncheon

Thursday, December 8, 2016

Theme 'Going Beyond our Boundaries'

(Check against delivery)

Thank you Marnie... Good afternoon and thank you for such a warm welcome.

I am excited to be here today giving my 14th State of the Town address to the business community. Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge some special guests we have here today.

I am pleased to introduce my Council colleagues: Michael Albano, Ted Brown, Jane Fogal, Jon Hurst, Bob Inglis, Moya Johnson, Dave Kentner, Ann Lawlor and Bryan Lewis. This State of the Town Address would not be possible without their support and input.

This year, the theme of my speech is **"Going Beyond our Boundaries"**

Speaking of **"Going Beyond our Boundaries,"** Clark Somerville, Regional and Halton Hills Councillor was elected President of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities – FCM earlier this year. Clark has done a great job of representing our community interests of all municipalities in meetings with federal officials. He has also attended numerous international events including last year's Climate Change Summit in Paris and recently Peru and Ecuador as well as criss-crossing our great country. His leadership will have a lasting, positive impression. Tonight he is at a special dinner hosted by the Prime Minister and his wife. So my speech got bumped. Clark, thank for your tireless efforts on putting Halton Hills on the political map.

Councillor Jane Fogal is another example of going beyond our boundaries with the community bike challenge – Where else can you cycle the distance to the moon and back? With Jane's leadership, we had another successful fourth year of the challenge where 1900 biking participants had the goal of biking over 400,000 kilometres. A whopping \$85,000 was raised for the Georgetown Hospital Foundation thanks to the generosity of our sponsors. To date, this, the largest fundraiser for our hospital has raised over \$263,500.

We also have a strong voice in Councillor Bryan Lewis who was elected to the board of directors for the Ontario Good Roads Association.

I would also like to welcome our out of town guests starting with Regional Chair Gary Carr.

A special welcome to Milton Mayor, Gord Krantz; who is now the longest serving Mayor of Canada, surpassing Hazel McCallion.

I'd also like to welcome Oakville Mayor, Rob Burton. This is especially timely as Oakville has just entered into another agreement with Pengzhou District, Chengdu City. There is a lot of synergies between Oakville and our sister districts.

Now I like to acknowledge the Town's Senior Management Team led by our CAO Brent Marshall. Congratulations Brent on your first year and a half, you have accomplished a lot in a short period of time.

Brent is capably assisted by our experienced and talented Senior Management Team consisting of: Ed DeSousa, Jane Diamanti, Warren Harris and Chris Mills and a special welcome to our new Fire Chief who joined us earlier this year, John deHooge. Chief deHooge who previously served as Fire Chief in Ottawa and Waterloo and deputy Fire Chief in Oakville.

Also a familiar face is Halton Hills Hydro President, Art Skidmore. Halton Hills Hydro has been one of the most efficient utilities in the province. The portion of your Halton Hills Hydro bill is approximately 16%. Over the past 10 years that portion has only increased by \$3.93. So you can't blame your rising hydro fees on Halton Hills Hydro.

Halton Hills Community Energy Corporation is continuing the support of the Mayors Community Energy Plan with solar projects such as the Acton Arena and the Towns Operations building to complement the existing solar project at Moldmaster's.

Thank you Nancy Surette and Fatima DasNeves for keeping my office in order and managing the day to day activities.

The Chamber has close to 500 members and is the largest business organization in Halton Hills. This organization represents the economic life blood of our Town. Many of the membership employ 10 people or less, and it's those jobs that greatly enrich our community, economically, socially and culturally. The real drivers of economic growth are small, locally-based businesses. In total, small businesses create a little over 100,000 jobs each year across Canada.

Besides providing jobs, the taxes you pay help us provide the services we deliver to our community. I appreciate the important role the Chamber plays in our Town.

So to our business leaders in attendance today – thank you for your commitment to our community.

Last year, I shared with you some of the things we were going to focus on and I'll spend the next few minutes providing you with an update on our progress thus far and how they align with our four pillars of sustainability.

Our four pillars of sustainability that are outlined in our Imagine Halton Hills plan are:

- **Economic Prosperity**
- **Cultural Vibrancy**
- **Environmental Health**
- **Social Wellbeing**

Under Economic Prosperity – we continue to look beyond our boundaries meaning we are constantly working with businesses outside of Town in the hopes that they will consider moving into the community.

Our economic development efforts are paying off and I'm happy to share this good news with you.

We continue to look beyond our boundaries as we are constantly working with businesses outside of Town in the hopes that they will consider moving here.

Christmas is coming early for Halton Hills as our Economic Development efforts are paying off. I have a huge announcement to make today.

John and Dave McNally have sold their property at 340 Main St. North in Acton. Canadian owned Vancouver-based Futura Properties Limited has purchased this industrial land. They will be making a 30 million dollar investment into the Town of Acton. The site will be developed in a high quality industrial subdivision complete with a rail spur. The company already has a tenant for a 20 acre site. This will result in new full time jobs for local residents. The new industrial lots will attract new businesses. They are hoping to have the first building approximately 150,000 square feet completed in late 2017. The company does have a lead tenant which will be announced in the near future.

This is probably the most significant investment in Acton in generations. This wouldn't have happened without the leadership of our CAO and Economic Development Officer. I have met with Futura and have gone over their site plans and they are excited to come to Acton.

In my speech last year I told you about a number of applications that were in the planning process or just at the start of construction. These projects are now at the building stage making 2016 a record year for construction in the Premier Gateway. The projects include the Broccolini building on Steeles at the 5th Line.

This 630,000 square foot building is the largest building in Halton Hills, but will only hold that title for a short time as the Bentall-Kennedy building on Steeles East of the 5th Line will be 770,000 square feet.

In addition, the Triovest building at James Snow Parkway and Steeles is under construction and this building is 550,000 square feet.

Other notable projects under construction include Gino's Pizza head office and the future home of Bradford White on Brigden Gate.

In all, Halton Hills has more than two million square feet under construction in the Premier Gateway. When it is fully built it will provide property tax revenues in excess of \$2 million per year.

This is in addition to the two million square feet that has already been developed in the Premier Gateway. I anticipate that this pace of growth in this strategic area will continue adding new buildings and jobs for our community.

While we are pleased with the success of the new developments in the Premier Gateway, I am equally excited by the expansions of current businesses in Halton Hills. This includes a 30,000 square foot addition to ISPA at 114 Armstrong Avenue and another 30,000 square foot addition for Purity Life in Acton.

Toronto Premium Outlet has been a major success since it opened its doors back in 2013. We are working with them on expanding their parking with a five storey parking garage to be located at the existing Ministry of Transportation car pool lot. This will be completed by 2018. Toronto Premium Outlets pay over \$3.6 million in School, Regional and Town taxes.

In 2014 we introduced the Community Improvement Plan (CIP) which is annually funded with \$75,000.

This program provides funding for façade and building improvements in the downtown areas of Acton, Georgetown and Guelph Street.

Applications are beginning to come in and so far this year I have been pleased to present final payments to three companies amounting to almost \$20,000 direct support to these local businesses.

Three other projects have been approved and work is ongoing, payments are only made when the project is fully complete.

Landscaping has been added to the CIP program. The CIP now supports the Acton and Georgetown Industrial Parks and will provide a grant of 50 per cent of eligible work to a maximum of \$12,500. This program will enhance the aesthetic quality of the properties.

Town staff is working closely with the Chamber of Commerce and Acton and Georgetown BIAs on business development and special events. A great deal of time has been spent working with the Acton BIA, stay tuned as many of the ideas and initiatives will be implemented in 2017. We are committed to investing time, talent and financial resources to support local businesses.

Physician Recruitment

The Town continues to invest in the recruitment of doctors in the community. This year I personally welcomed Dr. Jame Ade-Conde and Dr. Monica Torres, two new obstetricians to the community both with hospital privileges at the Georgetown hospital.

The physician recruitment program provides a \$5,000 grant and \$10,000 interest free loan, the physician agrees to maintain a practice in the community for five years. In addition, the Town, along the Region of Halton provides yearly support for the Nurse Practitioner at the Acton Urgent Care Medical Centre.

Former Memorial Arena Lands

The lands at the former Memorial Arena were purchased earlier this year by Amico.

They are proposing three buildings on-site:

- Building one is proposed to be a six-storey condo with 76 units. They intend to begin construction in April 2017; construction would take approximately 18 months.
- Building two is proposed to be a six-storey condo with 54 units. They intend to begin construction in April 2018.
- Building three is proposed to be a five-storey retirement residence with 144 suites. They intend to begin construction in Fall 2018.

Following their purchase of the Memorial Arena site, Amico also purchased the surrounding residential properties on Mill Street. To accommodate this purchase, Amico is refiling new Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendment applications seeking to expand the previous approval to obtain approval for the three buildings I just mentioned.

Rockport – 224 Maple Ave. - former Holy Cross site

Rockport purchased the site of the former Holy Cross Church. They are building a seven-storey, 154 suite and retirement residence. They intend to begin construction this fall. The construction process will take approximately 18 month.

I'm pleased to report that we have also made progress with our Cultural Vibrancy and Social Wellbeing pillars. Here are great examples of while we may be a small town, but we think **beyond our boundaries** in a big way!

We twinned with Wenjiang, a district in the city of Chengdu, China.

Chengdu is like Toronto and Wenjiang would compare to how North York and Etobicoke is. By way of background, Wenjiang District has a population of 700,000 people. It's not what we have in

common that is important, but what we offer to complement each other that will bring economic and cultural benefits to both communities.

Wenjiang District is attracted to Halton Hills because of our many assets. To understand how important our visit to Wenjiang was, I'd like to show you a news story that was carried on their local Chengdu television during our March visit. This newscast was broadcasted to their audience of 14 Million. Please note it's all in Chinese.

As you can see from this news story, we put Halton Hills on the international map. The meetings we had were very formal and focused. Our visit was as important to them as it was to us.

Halton Hills was the first Canadian municipality to enter a Sister-City Agreement with Wenjiang District. Our Agreement received a strong endorsement from the Canadian Ambassador to China, Mr. Guy Saint-Jacques. Among the highlights of the letter he wrote:

"...such twinning arrangements can lead to substantial benefits in the cultural, political, economic and trade areas. As you know, Canada is well regarded in China and we have seen rapid growth in bilateral relations in recent years."

Just over 20 municipalities have a relationship with a Chinese community. Halton Hills is by far the smallest, but it's a clear demonstration that we aren't going to let that hold us back, it's an example of how we are looking beyond our boundaries. Our agreement focuses on seven key areas:

- Economic Development & Foreign Direct Investment
- Culture, Arts & Tourism
- Sustainability, Quality of Life & Climate Change
- Renewable Energy
- Agriculture
- Education

Since the signing of the Sister-City Agreement, significant progress has been made in advancing the Town's relationship with Wenjiang.

Town staff has been in regular contact with Wenjiang officials to identify, discuss and negotiate actions that will implement the Agreement and have tangible positive benefits for Halton Hills.

We have developed a comprehensive and practical Action Plan, which was recently approved by Council. You can see the full details of the plan on the Town website.

The Chinese market has the potential to be a lucrative one. For example one week this past May, Toronto Premium Outlets welcomed over 4,000 visitors from China and this group spent an average of \$2,000 each at TPO. That's money being spent at a local business that would have otherwise been spent elsewhere.

The trade activity between Canada and China will continue to grow. Currently it sits at an estimated \$42 billion, which makes it Canada's second largest trade partner, next to the U.S.

Conversely, Canada only represents two per cent of China's trade so there is significant growth potential. The action plan approved by Council will see us focus on five specific areas that fall under the broad strategic categories of:

- Sustainable Development and Energy Conservation
- Business and Economic Investment
- Tourism
- Education and Health
- Arts, Culture and Economic Development.

An immediate action under the arts strategy demonstrates the fact that sometimes the word isn't so large after all.

To show you how it really is a small world and the connection to China, Georgetown resident, Nora Lipp was walking through our beautiful Hungry Hollow and she saw the tree and commemorative plaque we installed to recognize the Sister-City Agreement we signed here in June with Chengdu.

It turns out Ms. Lipp's great grandfather worked in Chengdu and her family is involved in a Chengdu photo exhibit that features Canadians who lived in Chengdu from the 1890's to 1950's, many of whom contributed their skills as doctors and teachers.

We were able to work with the resident and her brother to have the exhibit brought to Halton Hills. Canadians in Chengdu exhibit will be officially open in the afternoon of Saturday January 14 at the Helson Gallery and I hope you can all make it.

Just over 20 municipalities have a relationship with a Chinese community. Halton Hills is by far the smallest, but it's a clear demonstration that we aren't going to let that hold us back, it's an example of how we are looking beyond our borders.

We have made great strides in protecting our environment and living in a **sustainable community**.

As I mentioned earlier, we are a recognized leader beyond our own boundaries for the work we have undertaken through Imagine Halton Hills – our integrated sustainability strategy.

We continue to make progress against those strategies on a number of fronts.

We know that sustainability initiatives can only be successful if we work together. One of our strategies is to form Community Sustainability Strategic Partnerships. We have more than 80 partners that have signed up to date.

We have embarked on an **L-E-D streetlight** conversion program. There are approximately 4,500 streetlights to be converted. We estimate this conversion can lead to energy consumption savings of approximately 65 per cent. The conversions have started and will continue until it's finished

Halton Hills Public Library also did its part by introducing **wooden library cards**. This unique approach garnered provincial attention and our wooden library cards have made the shortlist of Ontario Public Libraries vying for the Minister's Award for Innovation. What's important is that we continue to look beyond our boundaries to find better ways of doing things.

2016 Updates

Transportation is an issue that continues to receive our attention, starting with our young people.

Last year we launched a Youth Taxi Script Program, it has been very successful. This proved quite popular as more than 1,800 trips taken in the first year with continual growth projected in the program.

The Town is undertaking a long-term **Truck Strategy** for Halton Hills. The study was initiated in September and is expected to be completed by end of 2017. This is a complex issue that spans multiple government jurisdictions across a number of borders. This will be a long term town wide study. We will identify appropriate routes and transportation network improvements required to support the safe and efficient movement of truck traffic in Halton Hills.

GTA-West Update/Panel Discussion and Norval Transportation Issues

In December 2015, the Ontario Ministry of Transportation suspended its work on the environmental assessment of the GTA-West to conduct an internal review of the work completed and to ensure it aligns with current government policies and emerging technologies.

A GTA-West Advisory Panel was established by the Ministry to provide certainty on the GTA-West corridor and narrow or eliminate lands from the Focused Analysis Area.

Our message throughout this process, one that I have personally shared with Transportation Minister Steven del Duca, is that our residents require clarity on those properties frozen by the GTA-West study.

Mayors along with MPP Ted Arnott as well as Regional politicians along the Kitchener GO line are still advocating for all day/two way GO service along the GO line. We did get two more trains added in Acton to connect to Georgetown.

Hidden Quarry

One issue that is outside our borders has been of keen interest to all of us – it's the Hidden Quarry. The Hidden Quarry is located in neighbouring Guelph/Eramosa. Even though it's outside our municipal boundaries, we know this quarry will have significant environmental and traffic implications in Acton, Georgetown and Norval.

We were engaged throughout this process and spoke consistently and loudly against this quarry as the truck routes proposed would negatively impact Halton Hills. We expressed our position clearly to our neighbours on the Guelph- Eramosa council. They rejected the proposal and it went to the OMB.

Well it looks like we won the battle, but not the war. A five-week hearing with the Ontario Municipal Board was expected; instead it was deferred indefinitely because the company filed under an old zoning bylaw. We expect they'll eventually re-file, but that will take some time.

To be clear, we are not opposed to aggregates. Council recognizes they play a vital role and we have a large one in our own community and it works very well. However, we need to make sure they exist with as little negative impact on people and the environment as possible.

2017 and Beyond

Another large multi-year project that the town is working on is the reconstruction on Armstrong Avenue. It will include new multi-use paths between Mountainview Road and Sinclair Avenue that will also support pedestrian traffic.

Next year, we have several roads slated for work in Halton Hills. One of the larger, multi-year Halton Region's main road projects is the Trafalgar Road widening and grade separations. This project will cost approximately \$140M.

Trafalgar Road will be widened from 2 lanes to 4 lanes from Steeles Avenue to Highway 7. This includes an underpass for rail lines at the corner of Maple and Trafalgar. Over 22,000 vehicles go over these tracks each day.

The Project has been split into 2 phases:

- Steeles Avenue to 10 Sideroad: Phase 1 starts in 2018
- 10 Sideroad to Highway 7: – Phase 2 starting in 2020

For the last few years we have talked about **Vision Georgetown**, the area south west of Georgetown. This committee, chaired by Councillor Moya Johnson will ensure that we will accommodate the Provincial Growth Plan between 2021 and 2031. Vision Georgetown is a significant project for the Town and involves detailed study in a number of areas.

Staff has been concentrating on finalizing some environmental matters in this area for the last while. Once that is completed, the preferred elements plan will be prepared and presented to the public for input.

We are making big changes at **The Town**. To that end, we are embarking on a new **Customer Service Strategy**.

It starts with renaming the Civic Centre to what it really is – a Town Hall. The name, Civic Centre doesn't depict what it truly means.

We want Town Hall to be a friendly and inviting place. Right now when a person walks into the building they find a large lobby and people are unsure of where they need to go and where departments are located. I never really liked it.

This doesn't reflect our Town, which is a warm and welcoming and helpful community. I encourage you after lunch to take a look at some of the renderings we have on display here that show some of the changes we would like to make. Council will look at these changes more closely in the New Year. The enhancements will begin in the New Year and likely continue until the spring.

We want to be transparent to the public. We know we are accountable to our community and we take that very seriously. We hope to eventually be able to stream our Council and committee meetings on our Town website.

To enhance our **communications** to the community we will be launching a new electronic newsletter in the New Year. This will be emailed once a month to anyone who signs up and it will also be posted on our website. It will contain news about Council decisions, as well as Town programs and services. More information will be shared in the near future.

The Town has always recognized the importance of **community** input and consultation. We currently have two studies underway in which we are actively engaging the community to gain input.

The first is focused on studying Action Sports, such as skateboarding, biking etc. in Georgetown. We want to hear what the community would like from the Town to encourage participation in these activities.

We have also launched a Community-Driven Active Living Strategy. You can find more information on both of these on the Town's website.

Like all communities we have our challenges – but our Town Council and our staff are committed and focused on doing what is best for the community. We will continue to deliver the services that residents and businesses wish to see.

The residents of Halton Hills want optimum public service and amenities and we know this must be delivered in a timely and cost- effective manner. Our new customer service strategy will go a long way to meeting this opportunity.

Halton Region is the safest community in Canada. Our plans and efforts are focused on ensuring Halton Hills remains a strong, livable, sustainable community and remains as one of the best places to live in Canada.

Conclusion

Once again Money Sense magazine has named Halton Hills as one of the top 25 best municipalities to live in. Burlington and Oakville are in the top 5 and Milton is not too far behind us. What that says is how well Halton Region is doing. We were also recognized as the ninth best place in Canada to raise our children; and that is something we should be proud of.

I hope I have left you with the sense that the Town is **looking beyond its boundaries**. While on the one hand we think big through trade missions to China, we never lose sight of the fact that people value that small town feel and we will continue to walk the balance beam to ensure our residents can enjoy the best of both worlds.

We will be celebrating Canada's 150th birthday in 2017. This is a country we can be proud of and there will be celebrations throughout the community.

Finally, it is the Holiday season and there's only 16 shopping days left...SO ...Be sure to shop smart, shop local, shop Halton Hills.

You have been a great audience. On behalf of my wife Josey and myself, I wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and happy and prosperous New Year. I'm Mayor Rick Bonnette – keeping it real.