

Mayor's State of the Town Address

Tuesday, December 12, 2017

Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce

(Check against delivery)

Thank you Drew and hello everyone – Gosh Darn it is good to see so many out to day to the Mayors Annual Christmas lunch.

Before I begin, I want to recognize my Council colleagues:

- Michael Albano
- Ted Brown
- Jane Fogal
- Jon Hurst
- Bob Inglis
- Moya Johnson
- Dave Kentner
- Ann Lawlor
- Bryan Lewis
- Clark Somerville

Thanks for being here – I may be biased, but I think we have a pretty good Council team that works well together – we have a strong, stable government and we work collaboratively with our local and regional partners such as Chair Carr, Burlington Mayor Rick Goldring, Oakville Mayor Rob Burton and Milton Mayor Gord Krantz.

I think what makes our Council work is that fundamentally, we all have shared values – and that's the theme of today's talk.

I have to tell you that I am extremely proud to be Mayor of this town. When I go to other municipalities or attend government conferences, I can tell you that Halton Hills is respected for how we do business, how we have kept our beautiful community intact while embracing and planning for growth, and quite frankly, we 'punch above our weight' and people know it. Councillor Clark Somerville is the past President of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities .Clark's role at FCM has certainly put us on the map while representing the interests of municipalities across the country to our federal counterparts. Clark, thank you for all you have done and continue to do with FCM.

Now, I could go on and speak about each of my colleagues but I'm simply going to say, thank you to each of you for your thoughtful dialogue, your interest and contributions to ensuring we collectively make the best decisions for our residents and our business community.

Council makes its decisions on the basis of the work that is done by our talented and professional staff so I do want to give a shout out to members of the senior management team who are here today....

Brent Marshall is our CAO and we are lucky to have him. Previously Brent was our Fire Chief and has now been our CAO for the past few years – Brent, I'm not sure whether you put out more fires in your role as Chief or CAO?

We also have with us from our senior management team:

Jane Diamanti, Warren Harris, Chris Mills, John Linhardt, Fire Chief John DeHooge and Geoff Cannon.

Another familiar face is Halton Hills Hydro President, Art Skidmore. Halton Hills Hydro has been one of the most efficient utilities in the province for five years in a row.

And finally, a big thank you to Nancy Surette and Fatima Das Neves for keeping my office in order and managing the day-to-day activities.

I felt that 'shared values' was an appropriate theme – particularly given that this has been an historic and exciting time as Canada's 150th year... now more than ever, I can feel a sense of patriotic pride that we all evoke as Canadians and fundamental to our nationality is equality, fairness and respect.

The Town, like municipalities across Canada celebrated local achievements this year but also recognized our national pride in living and working in this great country --- of course, our Town is special in that we are the 'most patriotic town in Canada' – thank you to the Chamber and all of our residents for participating in the display-a-Canadian-flag initiative. Over 57,000 flags were displayed and this achievement prompted a fly

past by the Snowbirds – a Canadian icon and a fitting end to a remarkable community accomplishment.

I am pleased that the Town contributed a significant amount financially as well as many sponsors to this wonderful event headed by so many volunteers!

This was an example of a community coming together and when I was thinking about this talk, it occurred to me that the hallmarks of our community are prosperity, the environment, sustainability and social well-being. When you are in a good place in all those areas, you end up with a darn good community – one that we can all be proud to call home. And I'm proud that we are still a small town but with big successes and big ambitions – and the secret is out – this year, MoneySense Magazine – a national magazine, ranked Halton Hills #24 in all of Canada!

Of course, MoneySense Magazine is about prosperity which typically refers to financial health ...and when we think of the health of the municipality – particularly at this time of year, we think of budgets.

The 2018 budget has been passed with an overall tax increase of 2.4 % including Regional, School board services. It includes a significant investment in various assets such as replacement of vehicles, equipment, repairs to roads, parks and trees. The budget includes monies for the construction of the Georgetown Sports Action Park at Gellert, additional bike lanes and pedestrian crossings. The budget also includes money for a number of plans and studies. What I want you to know, is that money spent by the municipality is allocated by a very detailed process to ensure that the community's needs are identified and met – whether it is through new infrastructure or investing the necessary monies to maintain existing infrastructure such as roads.

A major roads project for the Town in 2017 was the successful completion of the first phase of the reconstruction of Armstrong Avenue which includes curbs, pavement markings and a multi-purpose path on Sinclair Ave. from Guelph Street to Armstrong

Ave. making it safer for cyclists and pedestrians to access businesses in the Georgetown Industrial Park.

This nearly \$3M investment in new and improved infrastructure will be followed by design work in 2018 with the goal of reconstructing the remainder of Armstrong Avenue in 2019.

2017 saw a significant amount of work completed on various planning projects...

In February, the Town and Silvercreek Commercial Builders reached a settlement on the proposed McGibbon Hotel redevelopment project regarding the approval of a 10 storey (with lofts) 125 unit condominium building. In accordance with the settlement, Silvercreek is required to provide certain community benefits including:

- The reuse of original brick along the Main Street frontage
- The original brick or replica brick matched for colour, size and appearance along the Mill Street frontage
- Provision of a \$500,000 contribution towards the enhancement and preservation of heritage conservation initiatives and/or the provision of additional public facilities and improvements within and adjacent to Downtown Georgetown.

The development is currently going through the site plan approval process.

Rockport received final site plan approval for their 7 storey, 154 suite retirement residence located on Maple Avenue. Construction continues to progress on this building.

In July, the Amico project received Council approval on Phase One which entails a 76 unit, 6- storey condominium building on Mill Street. As part of the approval of this project, Amico committed to upgrade Mill Street beyond minimum requirements or provide the Town with funding to complete the work between Dayfoot Drive and Guelph Street. Amico's other two proposed condominium buildings remain under review.

2017 also saw the Vision Georgetown project reach a significant milestone when the draft Land Use Concept was prepared.

Vision Georgetown is the single most comprehensive planning strategy that this Town has ever seen, since Georgetown had its last urban boundary expansion in the mid-eighties. This plan lays out the projected residential growth in our town from 2021 and 2031 and is being planned in accordance with the policies and growth targets included in both the Provincial Growth Plan and Region of Halton Official Plan.

The last few years have been spent completing background studies, primarily environmental studies, to inform the draft Land Use Concept. We took this concept out to the public in September through an Open House and we were pleased to see over 100 members of the public attend and provide their comments. The next steps include more detailed studies on transportation, urban design and servicing.

The Vision Georgetown project is also posted on the Town's new online engagement platform called 'Letstalkhaltonhills'.

The platform is part of the Town's larger Public Engagement Strategy which included creation of the Mayor's Task Force on Public Engagement – another significant milestone for the Town.

The Task Force included a dedicated group of volunteers along with Councillors Fogal and Somerville, along with myself who participated in a series of sessions that culminated in a Charter that sets out the commitments and responsibilities of the Town as well as citizens.

In 2018, staff will be working on how to deliver on the Charter commitments so as to enhance our current methods of public engagement.

Also in 2018, the Customer Service Strategy will be fully executed and anyone who has been to Town Hall recently will see the physical transformation associated with this project. Our new customer service desk is part of a larger plan to improve how we service residents and businesses and I believe this change is long overdue.

I have spoken about the corporation's financial health but now I'd like to address prosperity from the perspective of the economic prosperity of our community, new business and business expansion.....

The state of our economy is strong and getting stronger and our supply of vacant and available industrial and manufacturing lands make Halton Hills a preferred choice for many industries. Halton Hills continues to be a prime location for investment, and a gateway to North America. With over 1400 businesses and their nearly 21,000 employees calling Halton Hills home, our economy is diverse and poised for continued growth.

The Halton Hills Premier Gateway is the prime business and investment location. It offers strategically located and serviced lands, with easy access to major networks and markets.

Last year I told you that 2016 was a record year for construction with over 2 million sq. ft. built; while 2017 was slower, many of the new buildings welcomed new businesses and employees to Halton Hills. Gino's Pizza moved into their head office/ call centre on Brownridge Drive in July and Bradford White opened their 75,000 sq. ft. head office on Brigden Gate in August. With this recent investment, the Town has seen almost 3 million square feet of new buildings in the Premier Gateway in the last 20 months— a significant contribution to the economic prosperity of Halton Hills, providing numerous employment opportunities for residents.

Toronto Premium Outlets continues to attract large crowds of shoppers to the Gateway. The nearly completed 1700 space parking garage will facilitate the expansion of the

Outlets by 150,000 sq. ft. providing more shopping choice for consumers.

In my speech last year, I told you about a significant investment in the Acton Industrial Park, which will bring new employment opportunities to the community. Site works are ongoing and a conditional building permit has been issued allowing the developer to get the foundation in. Town staff continues to work closely with Futura Properties Limited to realize the full potential of this 55 acre industrial subdivision.

Now – I want to ask you – how many of you have used Kraft Heinz products? I see quite a few hands and that's not a surprise. I am pleased to announce that the largest building in Halton Hills has been leased by QuadReal Property Group to Kraft Heinz Canada Corporation. The state of the art distribution centre is located on Steeles Ave. and the 5th Line. As one of the largest food and beverage companies in the world, with over \$26 billion in sales, Kraft is a welcome addition to our corporate family.

The Town has a number of studies and projects underway -- including a trucking strategy. Speaking of trucks

Another initiative is the truck monitoring station located on Maple Avenue across from Town Hall. This was implemented by Dufferin Aggregates to monitor the trucks being generated from their facility and to ensure that Maple Avenue is only being used for local deliveries. The installation of this monitor system has improved the quality of life for our residents that live on or near Maple Avenue. Thank you to Councillor Johnson for your involvement in this issue. We are also thankful to Dufferin Aggregates for their willingness to implement the monitoring system and their excellent working relationship with Halton Hills.

I also want to share with you information about Trafalgar Road. Since this is an arterial road, it isn't managed by the Town but instead, is managed by Halton Region.

The Region has commenced with the design to widen Trafalgar Road to 4 lanes from Steeles Avenue to Highway 7.

The project will be completed in two phases. The first phase is from Steeles Avenue to 10 Sideroad.

It is anticipated that construction will commence for that portion in 2019. The second phase from 10 Sideroad to Highway 7 will commence in 2021. This is delayed as the Environmental Assessment has been appealed.

As you can see, we are making investments in our roads infrastructure to support transportation improvements to better move the flow of goods and services. We are also making investments directly to businesses through the Community Improvement Plan. This is a cost-sharing program between the Town and businesses and it has had its most successful year in 2017 with 12 projects approved. The CIP benefits the community by improving the quality of buildings, increasing the value of the properties and yielding higher property taxes which provides a return on the Town's initial investment. The Town has issued \$151,000.00 in grants.

My congratulations to all the businesses for their investments in our town and their commitment to improving the commercial landscape!

The Town continues to make significant investments in downtown Acton as the area goes through a transition. The Community Improvement Plan has proven to be a key component and to date the Town has invested \$80,000 in downtown Acton with two more applications being processed.

Improving the appearance and reducing the vacancy rate in downtown Acton continues to be a priority. While there are vacancies, the BIA does have a many long-term successful businesses and a number are in the process of expanding. This initiative is part of the 'Vacant Store Action Plan'. A streetscaping plan is also under development and the Town and the BIA have invested \$30,000 into this project. In 2018, streetscape improvements will be implemented and an additional \$40,000 has been budgeted for new garbage cans, benches, signage and landscaping.

As you can see, the Town takes a very proactive approach to business development by creating opportunities to support local owners and working with organizations.

But we're also interested in fostering dynamic environments and so the Town reaches beyond our geographical boundaries....

In 2016, the Town of Halton Hills signed an agreement to become a sister city with Wenjiang China and subsequently developed the Sister-City Action Plan.

Our partnership with Wenjiang is part of our comprehensive economic development strategy. Here, we are not only continuing to assist with local business retention and expansion, but also taking action to ensure that Halton Hills can compete globally.

Our sister City action plan is already bearing results.

The trade mission I led to China this past September resulted in two historic business agreements. First, was an agreement between the HH Chamber of Commerce and the Wenjiang Chamber of Commerce – a first for both organizations!

It makes sense for us to do this – after all, China is Ontario's second-largest trading partner with about \$86 billion in trade and positions Halton Hills to be ready for future trade cooperation between China and Canada.

Establishing our presence now will benefit our local businesses when competing on the global stage.

Implementation of the agreement will establish business-to-business partnerships, raise trade and benefit the bottom line of our businesses by facilitating access to China. I am very proud of our Chamber for embarking on this journey. Kudos to Board member Judy Avery who represented the Chamber and handled herself with such poise at the discussions and the official signing.

In September, I also participated in the signing of an agreement between South Western Energy and Sichuan Taiyi New Energy. Taiyi New Energy is a leader in sustainable technology and registered on the Chinese stock market. They currently hold 40 patents in intelligent lighting solutions with a focus on solar thermal powered products. The MOU with SWE was predicated on installing an intelligent prototype solar

lighting system at Town Hall. This initiative supports Taiyi's desire to enter the Canadian marketplace.

This is a terrific opportunity for SWE – the project aligns with federal government regulations/mandate for sustainable energy solutions and positions them as partners with Taiyi who hopes to expand their operation here.

The demonstration project will be in the Town Hall parking lot and SWE will be providing support in the evaluation of the technology as it is tested through all of our seasons which is very different than the Chinese climate.

Another key milestone in the Sister City relationship was the recently held, one-week Wenjiang Festival and the hosting of over 40 delegates from Wenjiang, China. Cultural relationships are integral to fostering healthy business relationships.

All festival events were at full capacity with an estimated 1200 people taking part. The festival was also the backdrop for the signing of an agreement between Ethel Gardiner Primary School and a school in Wenjiang – further strengthening the relationship between our communities.

Building on this theme, last month we held an extremely successful and Sold Out 'Doing Business with China' Forum, in partnership with Oakville and Halton Region.

Earlier this year, the Town was also able to secure \$10,000 in funding from the Government of Canada to assist with developing initiatives to spur foreign direct investment.

This money is being used to launch an interactive website to encourage Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flow between Halton Hills and Wenjiang (China), as well as other international markets. The initiative supports local economic development and Halton Hills' global competitiveness. We expect to launch the website very soon.

Closer to home, I was thrilled to hear that the Town was successful in a grant application to receive \$175,000 from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities through their 'Municipalities for Climate Innovation Program'.

This investment validates the Town's direction and initiative in environmental sustainability and will be used to develop a Scenario-Based Climate Change Adaptation Plan which is one of Council's 2014-2018 strategic priorities.

I'm very proud of the Town's work on sustainability and our reputation in this field is rapidly spreading. I had the pleasure of being invited to Chicago at the request of Mayor Rahm Emmanuel. The invitation came in recognition of the Town's commitment to fight against climate change and taking action to reduce emissions. The gathering was because of Trump's withdrawal from the Paris Accord.

The historic Chicago Charter signing brought together 51 mayors from 10 countries, 6 continents representing 61 million people. There were only 3 Mayors from Canada, Montreal, Vancouver and myself. I was honoured and humbled to represent our Town and my country. We do punch above our weight. I had the pleasure of meeting Mayor Hidalgo of Paris France who initiated the Paris Agreement. With respect to Climate Change she left me with a comment that resonates with me. "If we don't act now there is no planet B". Also heard an inspiring speech from Barack Obama who spoke to us that we must act on Climate change as it is urgent. You have no idea the sense of pride I felt when my name, our Town and then Canada to go up on stage in front of about 500 observers to sign the charter. I also gave a speech later on to the Metropolitan Planning Council on our actions on the environment.

As I was the only Canadian in the room so of my American colleagues were teasing me calling me Captain Canada.

Today I am deeply saddened by the sudden passing of San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee whom I had a very good conversation at the summit.

Now I can't talk about sustainability without calling out Councillor Fogal on her Bike Challenge initiative! For the fifth year in a row, local cyclists have successfully met the

Halton Hills Bike Challenge and raised \$45,000 thanks to our sponsors in support of our wonderful Georgetown Hospital. 2,174 participants completed the epic task of cycling the equivalent of all the paved roads in Canada, taking a virtual tour from Whitehorse Yukon to St. John's Newfoundland.

Congratulations Councillor! I'm sure you were pleased to see that the budget included new bike paths!

I have spoken about shared values in the context of prosperity and sustainability and now I'd like to address social well-being which I characterize as those initiatives that support quality of life.

I believe that social well-being is about doing the right thing. And I believe that social well-being does not have borders. That's why, when I heard about the outrageous, right-wing demonstrations that were occurring not just in Charlottesville, United States but closer to home in London and Montreal, and places out west. I thought it was good for us to publicly state our opposition to racism.

So, in August I put forward a motion that stated racism will not be tolerated in our community and that we are all citizens of this world.

And let me tell you -- it is heartening when something good catches wind and this did -- as over 40 other municipalities in Ontario supported our resolution.

Locally, an issue that we as Council got behind and staff led by Brent Marshall did a tremendous job in addressing, is our community's vulnerable youth. When earlier this year a service provider opted out of running local youth centres, the Town stepped in. And I can recall Councillor Hurst saying, "This is one of the most significant issues we have dealt with." We couldn't agree more. And, in doing so, we assumed a leadership role and staff now co-lead a dynamic network of agencies that support youth and are working together to address issues of homelessness, mental health and food to name a few. I'm proud to say that 'Halton Hills looks after its own!'

Although social services is delivered at the Regional level and they do a great job, we need to identify and proactively address the issues that affect the people in our community -- and we do this by collaboration, by innovation and by investing in the people, programs and services that make sense. This is responsible government and it serves to support community wellness.

Community wellness is also supported by the service provided by our Fire Department... from January 1- November 22, fire fighters have responded to almost 900 calls and attended 96 public education events. Our fire fighters also installed 238 child car seats – a free service provided to the community.

And community wellness is also characterized by a thriving library system – a place where the imagination can run and learning takes many forms...did you know that the libraries average 25,000 visits a month?

Conclusion

Well, I thank you for the time you have given me and I hope that somewhere in my talk you have found relevance...whether it is an interest in connecting with the Town to tap into our resources, fostering a local initiative, expanding into the overseas market or even just networking with peers....

Where ever your interests may lie, know that there is commonality amongst us all in the values we share as residents or business people working here in the beautiful Town of Halton Hills.

Thank you everyone – and on behalf of my wife Josey and all members of Town Council, I wish you a safe and Merry Christmas! I am Mayor Rick Bonnette and I am keeping it real.