

Mayor Rick Bonnette Inaugural Speech

Monday December 3, 2018

John Elliott Theatre

9 Church Street, Halton Hills

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Good evening everyone and thank you so much for being here this evening.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Town Clerk, Suzanne Jones and the entire staff team for making all the arrangements for this evening and for swearing in this Council.

Warren Harris, our Master of Ceremonies, thank you for keeping us on track and on time.

I would also like to thank Acton Citizen of the Year Pastor Ray Van der Kooy of the Bethel Christian Church in Acton for the Invocation prayer and Reverend Paul Ivany of the Norval United Church who will later give the Benediction prayers.

Special thanks to Vivian Hicks, who sang our national anthem, and to the Halton Hills Fire Department Honour Guard.

I'd also like to recognize and thank Mark Rowe, our local historian for sharing some information about our community. Many of us who grew up here have long roots in Halton Hills and it's good to remember where we came from. Our past is so important to us.

I would also like to acknowledge former Mayors Marilyn Serjeanston the fourth Mayor Kathy Gastle, the fifth Mayor in our Halton Hills history who is here tonight and my friend and deputy Mayor of Wasaga Beach, Sylvia Bray.

Tonight is a special occasion, not only for me, the sixth Mayor in our municipality's history, but also for all members of the 16th council elected for the Town of Halton Hills. Tonight is a special occasion and all of you, the invited guests, are here because you made a difference and you are important. You are the family members, the friends and tireless campaign workers. It is through your support and encouragement that has made tonight's inaugural

celebration a reality. On behalf of all members of Council I thank you.

Like the councillors here tonight, I am very pleased that my family is here to celebrate this very special occasion. I'd like to thank my wife Josey, who stands by me through thick and thin... my sister Diane...my brother Bob and his wife Inge. I know too, that my mom and dad are here in spirit....

We are here to mark the start of the next four years and in planning the way forward, it is important to recognize the challenges and successes of years past. Please know that we will continue to build on the incredible work that was performed by staff and Council during the last term and we will continue to advocate for the health and well-being of this community!

This past year we moved up in the MoneySense Magazine ranking to number 10 in all of Canada for a municipality this size. If that isn't a marker of success, I don't know what is! The ranking is indicative of the high quality of life we enjoy here in Halton Hills. And it is a quality of life supported by the decisions of this Council; the volunteers in this community;

the work of our professional staff and the businesses who establish here and provide economic opportunities for the benefit of all.

It is our job at Council to maintain and continue to foster this quality of life! We will continue to manage tax payer's money efficiently by making sound, financial decisions. Our annual audit by an external agency confirmed our positive financial position and approach to doing business...and I just want to point out, that municipalities receive only 9% of all the taxes paid, yet we own over 60% of the infrastructure. It isn't fair that we have to maintain and pay for this tremendous shortfall.

Council is responsible for making decisions to meet today's needs and tomorrow's demands. The Provincial *Legislated Places to Grow Plan* will see Halton Hills will grow by close to 20,000 people in the future. We are controlling how and where that growth will occur. The Vision Georgetown project (our plan for accommodating this growth) achieved a significant milestone last term with the approval of the Secondary Plan. This plan came as a result of countless hours of consultation and work with numerous stakeholders.

I am committed to seeing that growth should not place a financial burden on the Town and growth should not place extraordinary demands on existing facilities.

As members of Council, it is our job to oversee where investments are made and I can tell you, that we have been consistent in making capital investments to support the safety, cultural and sports vibrancy of our community. During our last term, we:

- Redesigned Prospect Park Dock and the Waterfront area to improve accessibility
- Supported our local youth at risk
- Invested in our roads and other infrastructure
- Opened 7 new pedestrian walkways to support safety in our community

These capital investments support our community, address shortcomings and meet needs identified by residents.

Please know that we will continue to apply for federal and provincial funding to offset costs for our infrastructure and programs and services. And while it is unclear to what extent we may be successful (given that both governments seek to

balance their respective budgets), we remain undeterred in our efforts to leverage opportunities.

This is how we maintain quality of life. We have a great place to live and I truly stand by our motto that Halton Hills is “Small Town Living at Its Best.”

Our small town offers the best in urban and rural geography, employment and recreation opportunities. We work hard to preserve our rolling hills, picturesque countryside and open spaces. We also work hard to attract businesses and create employment opportunities. We have a diverse economy with over 1,450 businesses and 21,200 jobs. We have seen our Premier Gateway on Steeles Avenue grow by over 5 million square feet on industrial/commercial development. We work with our business partners. Their success is our success.

We recognize that as we grow, we need to have a transportation plan that accommodates the needs of this community. That’s why we are undertaking a Transit Strategy – we are looking at options to determine the best ‘made in Halton Hills’ solution. Let me assure you, we will not have a transit system that involves 47-seat empty buses

travelling up and down our streets – that is NOT my vision, councillors' vision and I'm sure it's not yours either.

As well, we will continue to work with GO Transit as they make service improvements in Acton and Georgetown. We will also continue to push for all day two way service GO service.

Council will look for affordable/senior housing opportunities. Council will continue to be mindful of those in our community who may be less fortunate. We want an inclusive community where everyone feels a part of it.

Planning for our future means we will continue to market ourselves overseas and foster new business relationships through our sister city partnership with Wenjiang., China. We are well aligned with the provincial and federal governments' direction on trade and we are leaders at the municipal level. One of the reasons China is so interested in working with us is our leadership in sustainability. We will help them plan their next sustainable community in Wenjiang and we will continue our work locally on climate change and advocacy on , Provincial, National and International level.

As the Mayor of Paris France told me during a conversation in Chicago last year, “when it comes to our planet there is no Plan B. “Our work – both locally and abroad is as always, guided by our four pillars of sustainability: Economic, Environmental, Social and Cultural.

I think that ‘sustainability’ might also describe our Council. This past election saw the return of the majority of our Councillors with solid mandates by the voters. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the good work, support and insight that former Councillor Dave Kentner provided during his 12 years of service – this is a man who truly ‘walked the talk’ in this community and I know that he will continue to serve through his volunteer efforts and numerous associations.

It is my pleasure to welcome Wendy Farrow-Reed as our newest Councillor! Wendy will bring a fresh perspective and be a wonderful addition to the Council team. Like all of our returning Councillors Wendy will also be a strong advocate for our community.

I am very humbled to be Mayor of this great Town in the next four years. At the same time, I wear my role as Mayor of this

community and the head of Council with great pride. It is an honour to serve this community. I say 'serve', because this job (and the job of all Councillors) is not about ego.

It is not about the wants or desires of any one person, but rather, it understands the landscape of how to best support the residents and businesses in this community....

It is about looking to staff to provide professional, practical and reasoned recommendations on issues that affect how, where and when we spend taxpayers' dollars...

It is about a Council, coming together to discuss and yes, sometimes hotly debate issues to make decisions that serve the interests of this community....

And being a leader – whether it is on Council, in business or the head of an organization means making decisions that are not always popular – but that doesn't mean they are the wrong decisions.

As your Mayor, I will continue to lead this Council and I expect that there will be times when we have differences of

opinion. That is democracy – and everyone on Council got here through a democratic process.

We are one Council and we have one mandate – to serve this community. I know everyone on Council will embrace this goal and I certainly hope that this community will bring forward their thoughts in a respectful and transparent manner.

As your Mayor for the next four years, I will continue to be an advocate for our community. I will advocate for more affordable housing/seniors' housing...I will advocate along with council for our community needs and wants – and support facilities such as Gellert Phase Two with Youth, families and Seniors being the focus.

And I will do so in the style that I have always maintained – being open and accessible and engaging with the public. I led the Mayor's Task Force on Public Engagement and we continue to promote and provide opportunities for the community to have their say on various initiatives. In fact the first issue that we will be seeking input on is cannabis – watch for that consultation in the New Year!

I am not going to change my style, I will work with all levels of government in a positive way but I will continue to battle, along with members of this council (wherever we deem necessary), to other levels of government or agencies that develop policies that negatively impact our Town.

Returning members of council have demonstrated that they are not afraid to take issues head on.

And if we make mistakes, we'll admit them (no government is perfect and no one is perfect) especially me, just ask my wife Josey.

So please know....whether you live in Glen Williams, Acton, Georgetown, Stewarttown, Norval, Hornby, Limehouse, Ashgrove, farm, or anywhere else within Halton Hills you are all important.

My door will continue to be open.

And finally, let me close this speech with a huge thank you to each and every one of you for attending this special evening.

I am Mayor Rick Bonnette, and I'm keeping it REAL!