

**Mayor Rick Bonnette State of the Town Speech**  
**Monday December 11, 2018**  
**Eagle Ridge Golf Club**

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Thank you Melanie and hello everyone – it's great to see so many people here. Before I begin, I want to recognize my Council colleagues. As you know, the majority of our Councillors were returned to office. However, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the good work, support and insight that former Councillor Dave Kentner provided during his years of service. This man truly 'walked the talk' in this community and I know that he will continue to serve through his volunteer efforts and numerous associations.

Representatives here from our newly inaugurated Council are: (List the councillors present). Of interest there is 135 years of experience on council. It is also my pleasure to welcome Wendy Farrow-Reed as the newest member of our team ! Wendy will bring a fresh perspective and be a wonderful addition to the Council team.

I'd also like to recognize Brent Marshall – our Chief Administrative Officer. His tireless leadership, strategic thinking, dedicated service and ongoing pursuit of excellence for the Town of Halton Hills is much appreciated.

I like to choose a theme for my annual address and this year, it is 'The Term of Opportunity'.

Today I will speak to what I see in the term ahead. Today is the first step towards the next four years. In about less than two hours from now we will be having our first council and committee meetings.

I am committed to continuing the incredible work that was performed by staff and Council during the last term. We have had many successes and we will build on these as we plan the way forward. We are small town living at its best.

I mentioned success and what better marker of success than our ranking in MoneySense magazine! This is a national magazine that looks at factors that contribute to quality of life and this past year we moved up in our category, to number 10 in all of Canada. This doesn't happen by accident and it doesn't happen alone.

The ranking is indicative of the high quality of life we enjoy here in Halton Hills. It is a quality of life supported by the decisions of this Council; our fabulous volunteers in this community; the work of our professional staff and the businesses who establish here who provide economic opportunities for the benefit of all.

Quality of life though is more than our cultured programs and events, our rolling hills, picturesque countryside, open spaces and recreation facilities. Quality of life also means employment, ensuring businesses continue to create jobs and new businesses are attracted to our Town.

In fact, quality of life is the main factor in attracting investment. We recognized this early on and that is why we are leveraging our unique business opportunities and cultural initiatives to attract investment, grow existing businesses.

‘When you’re successful, we’re successful!’

We continue to make significant gains in economic development and the local economy continues to grow despite uncertainty created by the U.S. and its approach to trade.

According to the 2017 Halton Region Employment Survey, the Halton Hills economy expanded in both the number of businesses *and* the number of jobs. That lines up with what we have been seeing:

- Demand for employment lands and buildings continues to be robust particularly as the supply of industrial lands becomes increasingly scarce in the neighbouring municipalities.
- Halton Hills is becoming a prime destination for investment. We are home to 1452 businesses which is
- 21,175 jobs are located in Halton Hills,
- Full-time jobs account for 63% of all jobs in Halton Hills.

The Town has worked hard to ramp up its Economic Development program led by our Economic Development team of Damian Sylbalski and Cassandra Baccardax. They are actively working to attract investment. We have a lot to offer and the word is out about the *Premier Gateway* which offers a strategic location, easy access to major transportation networks and proximity to key markets. One of the businesses located here is Kraft Heinz. They *scaled up* their operation to serve as the Canadian distribution hub for thousands of products. They continue to invest in here and members of council and I was very pleased to tour their facility earlier this year. They are looking to another huge expansion to their existing facility. Strong market demand has also led to over half of the 564,000 sq. ft. Triovest-managed building at Cleve Court to be leased out.

I also attended along with members of council the grand opening of the Toronto Premium Outlets (TPO) expansion. TPO is a major attraction for Halton Hills drawing several million visitors annually. The 150,000 square foot expansion added 40 new stores plus dining options and earlier this year they completed a multi-million dollar, 5-storey parking garage. That tells me that they are here for the long-term.

Downtown Georgetown has also had a number of notable commercial investments including Goodfellas Wood Oven Pizza and the Furnace Room Brewery near the GO Station. Yes we are open for business and continue to be open for business.

We have had some great successes in Georgetown but we have also had a recent disappointment. I'm sure you have all heard about the cancellation of the McGibbon Hotel project. I said it before; *I'm extremely disappointed and I am concerned about the buyers.*

The Town has had questions about our role in the failure of this project. Well, let me be clear – this is a *private development.*

The Town did not hold up the project or impede it...Let me provide a bit of background....

The Town was working to find a balanced approach to issues regarding design, height, heritage, parking and environmental considerations. Many of these issues were raised by the public.

The project was appealed to the Ontario Municipal board by the developer and both parties agreed on a resolution which was supported by council.

There were significant staff, Council and financial resources directed towards this project.

At the end of the day, the Town was still waiting on submission and information to finalize the planning process when we learned the project was cancelled. The owners stated that it was due “due to circumstances beyond our control. It was un-financeable ”. I am sure Doug and Don are also disappointed as well.

The Town can't do anything more until we learn more. Again, the Town doesn't own the property but we do want to work with the developer to either re-start this project or help them find a buyer. So my message to you is stay tuned!!

I have also heard comments that the McGibbon is just another Barber Mill. Let me tell you, that's an apples-to-oranges comparison.

The only thing these projects have in common is a heritage aspect.

Even though the developer had submitted proposals and renderings that are attractive, the proposal hadn't advanced largely due to issues regarding conservation and site contamination. These issues were raised by the Credit Valley Conservation Authority and Halton Region. Council never voted on this project.

The Town is encouraged that any other matters on this property can be dealt with. This file is not dead as the last few months the developer has been back speaking to staff. Despite these setbacks, there are good things happening...

- 224 Maple is the old Holy Cross Church site and is under construction for seniors' housing which is almost completed.
- There is also another 6-story seniors' building on Mountainview and we anticipate construction starting in 2019.
- Over on the old Memorial Arena site at 42 Mill Street – just a block from the downtown, they are doing really well with sales for their condo units and will begin construction soon on building 1.
- They are making plans for buildings 2 and 3 soon as well.

I've spent some time talking about Georgetown so let me share all the good things that are going on in Acton.

The Halton Hills Industrial Park being developed by Futura Properties Ltd. is quickly becoming the community's economic hub of the north with the addition of the Ontario Building Materials Division of CanWel Building Materials Group Ltd.

And the Acton downtown area has had one of the quickest turn-around that I have seen...

Last May we had around 12 empty stores in their downtown.

Now, we have several new businesses including:

- Ambition Performing Arts Centre
- Helson Law Office
- House of Work Wear
- JV Computer Repairs
- Oh Behave Canine Pawllege
- One Stop Medical Clinic and Pharmacy
- Tic Toc Watch and Clock Repair.
- Plant Society Kitchen
- Vegan Food Services

There many businesses that took advantage of the Community Investment Program.

Since the program started, the Town has awarded a total of \$323,000 in grants and loans throughout Halton Hills which in turn resulted in a community investment of over \$650,000.) In the upcoming weeks I will be presenting cheques to 6 more businesses who took advantage of this opportunity with the Town.

As you can see, there are positive things happening with economic development. One of the next untapped economic opportunities that we are pursuing is tourism. Tourism has a huge potential benefit for our community and also aligns with the federal government strategy.

One of the ways we are boosting tourism (and connected to our economic development strategy) is through our relationship with Wenjiang, China.

Why China? I say, 'Why not China?' China is the number two trading partner with Canada to the tune of \$46 billion a year ! No mystery there. We don't want to put all our eggs in one basket with the USA (look at the recent trade war with them) – we want to diversify.

Again, we are looking for opportunities.

It's amazing how many of our Halton Hills businesses are presently doing business in China.

I know there is recent developing issue in the news with China and Canada seems to be caught in the cross-fire between the USA and China. We are watching this closely to see if this escalates. Hopefully it will be resolved with a positive outcome.

As members of Council, it is our job to look at the big community picture; we must oversee where investments are made.

We must make decisions that support our economic health as well as the safety, cultural and sports vibrancy of our community.

We have been consistent in making strategic capital investments to support our community.

One example is the Armstrong Avenue project which includes road construction and the continuation of the multiuse path that will allow employees to easily access the area by walking and cycling.

The project is entering phase two of reconstruction from Sinclair Avenue to Guelph Street and is anticipated to commence in the spring of 2019. Staff already held a Public Information Centre.

This is a \$3M dollar project that when coupled with the first phase that was recently completed, will be an estimated \$6M dollars investment in the Georgetown Industrial Park.

Fiscal accountability is a priority and we must recognize that there is a cost to maintaining all that we currently have....

However, we need to balance the level of investment for current infrastructure with the need to put money away for the longer term.

As local business owners, operators, partners or residents of Halton Hills, you want optimum public service in the timeliest, most cost-effective manner.

The Town must operate with accountability and competence and keep our sound financial position. That's why the Town has a long range financial plan and a 10 year projection to guide Council in our financial decision-making.

I'm sure you know too, that the Town owns Halton Hills Hydro and the same prudent, financial oversight that we at the municipality apply, is applied here. This is evident in the utility's commitment to innovation which was recognized by the Electricity Distributors Association with the prestigious Innovation Excellence Award.

Halton Hills Hydro received the accolades for their approach to business which includes identifying small actions that pave the way towards cost savings and efficiencies.

It is important to note that municipalities receive only 9% of all the taxes paid, yet we own and maintain over 60% of the infrastructure.

The burden of this tremendous shortfall lies directly on our taxpayers. Please know that I will continue to advocate to the higher levels of government for our share of available funding.

This term we will be dealing with the new Provincial Government in regard to the GTA West Corridor. They recently announced that this project is re-starting. Halton Hills must have a voice at the table. I have previously stated our concerns with a major highway cutting through our countryside – a highway that does not provide significant benefits to Halton Hills.

I am not sure that this is the best solution. It will be 10-20 years before it may be built. With technology changing there may be better transportation. I believe that the money required for a new highway would be better spent investing in transit such as rail and address the local community issues caused by Highway 7 and the connecting link. Remember Highway 7 is owned by the Province. I'd like them to address the assets they currently own before developing new ones.

It is time that MTO takes the lead in solving the truck traffic by moving forward with the required bypass studies and improvements in Acton and Norval. Look after your front yard before going into our backyard.

We need to remain vigilant and take action to uphold and continually foster our high quality of life! Climate Change is real. Recently top Economist predicts Climate Change will cause the next recession from flooding to drought. We must be vigilant to do our part.

And we do this in part, by *managing the growth* in our community in sustainable policies.

We reached a significant milestone with the approval of the Secondary Plan for Vision Georgetown.

This plan was the result of countless hours of work and consultation with multiple stakeholders and the public.

This plan supports the Provincially-mandated growth direction for Halton Region.

Halton Hills will grow by nearly 20,000 people in the future and we are controlling how and where that growth will occur. Growth should not place a financial burden on the Town and growth should not place extraordinary demands on existing facilities.

In planning for growth Council is also mindful of the need for affordable/senior housing opportunities. We must continue to work for and advocate on behalf of those in our community who are less fortunate. We want an inclusive community where everyone feels a part of it.

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

Last year, we assumed the responsibility for ActiVan when the service provider withdrew their support. The decision was made to ensure that our residents –current ActiVan users – could still receive the service they depended on to get around town. That’s an example of a “made in Halton Hills solution. “

We will also continue to work with GO Transit as they make service improvements in Acton and Georgetown and we will continue to push for all day, two-way service GO service. The Mayors on the Kitchener line including myself have already met with the new government on this vital issue.

Planning for our future will figure prominently in Council’s deliberations next year. As part of this process Town Council will update the Strategic Plan and will build on the work that has begun....

We will continue our efforts to engage the public and operate in a transparent and accountable manner and many of you know that I led a task force on public engagement. One of the new issues that we will be consulting on in the New Year is cannabis; watch for that in January.

And, for those of you who want to know what is happening at Town Council but can't find the time to attend – we have live streaming of our meetings and you can watch archived versions at your leisure from your computer!

There is a lot that we can be proud of and I know that the work is never done. I feel it's important to recognize our values and the direction we have taken (and will continue to take), which in turn upholds our quality of life:

We respect and honour our volunteers.

We work to uphold and build on the amenities our residents want such as greenspace, trails and bike paths.

We respect and protect the environment.

We have a Sustainability Plan that is nationally and internationally recognized. It is a balanced approach to business by considering the four pillars of sustainability, namely: Economic, Environmental, Social and Cultural in our decision-making.

I am humbled to be re-elected Mayor of this great town. 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 is about understanding 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 embraces this goal and I certainly hope that this community will bring forward their thoughts in a respectful and transparent manner. My door continues to be open.

No matter where you live in Halton Hills you are all important and will be listened to.

It is 14 days to Christmas. A reminder to Shop Local, Shop Smart Shop Halton Hills.

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