

Mayor attends North American Climate Summit in Chicago

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The mayor of Halton Hills was invited to Chicago to discuss climate change and sustainability, ultimately signing a charter with 50 other mayors.

The meeting, called the North American Climate Summit, took place in Illinois and Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette found himself there from Dec. 3 to Dec. 6. Bonnette was formally invited by mayor of Chicago Rahm Emanuel, and was one of only three Canadian mayors to attend.

The summit focused on the effects of climate change and creating sustainable environments. The days were jam-packed with information sessions, workshops and speakers, including an address from former president of the United States Barack Obama.

According to Bonnette, he was sought after by the

summit because of the many things Halton Hills does to be sustainable.

For the past several years, the Town has implemented a number of programs to keep the town sustainable. In 2017, Halton Hills council adopted a climate change adaptation (resiliency) plan, and it will help with a number of things: a natural capital assessment, which will identify significant environmental areas that can be leveraged to increase the Town's planning for climate change; a greenhouse gas emission modelling exercise to better understand how climate change will likely affect Halton Hills; and a town facility vulnerability assessment, which will take a look at any climate-related vulnerabilities at the Town's facilities.

In 2010, Green Development Standards were implemented, which is a green building certificate program. Developers who look to build in Halton



Halton Hills photo

When it came to his turn to sign the Chicago Accord, Mayor Bonnette was overwhelmed with emotion.

Hills have to adhere to a number of green initiatives, and are given points for every green problem they implement. If they don't earn enough points, they aren't allowed to build.

Last year, Halton Hills signed a 'twin city' agreement with Wenjiang, China, and Bonnette said it's

because of the Town's sustainability initiatives.

"Here's a city of 22 million and they came to Halton Hills," he said. "We are getting some reputation."

During the trip, the mayor gave an address and spoke about Halton Hills, and was part of a panel alongside the mayors of Knoxville, Honolulu, Pitts-

boro and others.

"The Chicago Accord is the road forward to deliver the protocol of the Paris agreement," he said. "There were 51 mayors representing 10 countries, most continents, and 61 million people."

When it came to his turn to sign the accord, Bonnette was overwhelmed

with emotion.

"There's this sense of pride for our community, that we were recognized," he said. "There's all these mayors from around the world and here's Halton Hills, which proves, in my mind, you don't have to be big to be successful. We punch above our weight."

Bonnette said when Anne Hidalgo, mayor of Paris, spoke at the summit, her words resonated and will continue to resonate with him for a long time.

"She said, there is no Planet B ... We have to get it right."

Fighting climate change starts at the local level, and Bonnette is confident Halton Hills is on the right track.

"Municipal leaders are the leaders of climate change. and I can honestly say that about the team at Halton Hills," he said. "We brought in a green plan in 2007 and we're ahead of most municipalities in Ontario."

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