

What was and what is to come

I want to take both a look back and a look forward this month. 2009 was a busy year for Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce. With the economy presenting the challenges it did, our members turned to us to make use of the resources we provide; networking opportunities, cost effective group insurance benefits, advocacy, and sometimes just an ear to bend with an idea. The Chamber began the year with

502 members, and ended with 515, and increase of almost 3%. Our business community understands the benefit of Chamber membership, with small, medium and large enterprises taking advantage.

The board has been working at updating our strategic plan. That is time-consuming, but vitally important to a forward-looking organization. The Chamber has representation on the Town's new Tourism committee. Did you know that a tourist is defined as someone who travels more than 40 kilometres to visit an area for purposes other than work or school, and spends more than 6 hours? You may not think of your business as benefiting from tourism, but retail business, gas stations, and restaurants can easily be the recipient of tourist dollars, and you may be an ambassador for our town. We want to ensure that Halton Hills is a

place that attracts people to want to come and spend some time and money. We have many wonderful businesses, places and events to draw people, but we can always do more, and do better.



From the Boardroom
Helen MacCormack
President

The environment and being better guardians of our valuable resources was a big focus this year, for the Chamber as well as for everyone. Halton Hills was fortunate to have Emily Dimytosh of Practically Green Solutions working with local businesses this year to do assessments of their green practices. I know that she did an excellent job in our office of helping us identify ways we could improve our efforts. Kudos to Emily!

In looking ahead to this year, I believe we have plenty of reason for optimism. In the last quarter of 2009 the economy started to show signs of recovery. Vehicle sales and home sales both increased, putting activity near the

pre-recession level of November 2007. The Bank of Canada has signalled improving conditions. Canada's economy is poised for positive growth for 2010. Predictions from RBC indicate that our real GDP will rise by 2.6% in 2010, and continue to expand in 2011. Consumer spending is also expected to increase this year, by 2.3%. Craig Wright, RBC senior vice-president and chief economist has said that while challenges remain, a peak in stimulus and infrastructure spending across the federal, provincial and municipal governments, along with low interest rates, should result in a sustained recovery.

I welcome your ideas, comments and suggestions. What do you see happening in your business or your industry this year? Your Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce is here for you. Please feel free to call me directly at 905 873-1877 or email me at helen@haltonhillschamber.on.ca. Of course you can always call the Chamber office directly at 905 877-7119.

Here's to a prosperous 2010!

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Canadian Tire Associate Store, Georgetown - There for You!

By Cor Baarda,
Knowledge Management Enterprises

These days, with Christmas just past, most of us are more than ever aware of how important Canadian Tire is to Halton Hills. Tomas Kase has been the associate dealer in Georgetown since 1991 during which time the store moved from its original location to the present site, had an internal face-lift in 2000, and underwent a major expansion in 2006 increasing the total space by 80% to 51,000 sq. ft. As you can imagine, this was a real challenge to the owner, the management, and the staff, and having to deal with a major economic downturn didn't help.

That kind of change comes from a lifetime commitment to serving your community - and Canadian Tire dealers are service driven, as you have to be when you carry 40,000 items. You want to be just a little better than your competition - in customer service, in access, and a little more attractive in layout, because once in blue moon something will go wrong, in spite of

everyone's best intentions.

Being an integral part of your community means meeting the community's needs - with the right products in stock at the right time and at the right prices. A strong promotional program makes the community aware



that the store has what is needed, whether that area is gardening, outdoor living or the right sports equipment in season. All these things are strengths that serve the community well, as does having competent, stable ownership and management staff - most of whom have been together since 1991. Such continuity makes a real difference -

they love living here for many of the reasons their customers live here!

It also means providing significant capital funding for the SportsPlex and equipment for Georgetown Hospital's obstetrics unit. It means helping over 250 children from low-income families participate in sports and recreation locally through the Halton Hills Jumpstart Chapter, funded 50% by the Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities and 50% from monies raised by the local Chapter (the Georgetown store is probably the best in Canada). The goal of this program is to increase a child's chance of success through:

- A healthier lifestyle
- Increased self esteem and confidence
- Opportunities to learn important leadership skills
- Improved school performance and future education expectations
- More positive relationship and strengthened community support

That certainly will be good for our community and the world at large!