

Wish list has a price, cautions mayor

By **CYNTHIA GAMBLE**
Staff Writer

Mayor Rick Bonnette's theme in his annual speech to the business community yesterday (Monday) outlined a long list of what he and council wants to do over the next four years, but tempered by a common thread "can we afford it?"

It was a speech tailored to the sold-out business audience hosted by the Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce at the Club at North Halton.

"Our greatest challenge for the business community, and indeed the community at large, will be managing the cost impact that we, as a Town, impose on you ... I would love to stand here and tell you that I will be able to reduce that cost burden but that would be misleading," the mayor said, adding some tax increases may be necessary for the greater good.

However, he did have good news for businesses; he will direct Town staff to review the business licensing bylaw—looking to cut red tape and even provide possible exemptions.

Staff will also review various development and building requirements that impact businesses—expansions, renovations, signage, access, etc.

The Town will also be looking to pursue ways to add more commercial value to local farming operations in Halton Hills.

"The challenge will be to develop a strategy that can help our farmers to enhance the operating profits from their farm opera-

tions to make it worthwhile for them to stay in farming," said Bonnette.

A number of costly projects will be considered over the next term but Bonnette quipped, "We all want to go to Heaven, but no one wants to die. In other words, everyone wants everything, but they don't want to pay for it."

Among these projects:

- The Norval Bypass and the north-south Halton-Peel highway, but Bonnette said the challenge would be how to pay for the \$629 million project.

- Defending at the Ontario Municipal Board, the Town's decision to limit new growth to 1,000 acres and 20,000 people.

"The Town is facing long expensive appeals to the OMB from developers whose lands were not included in the expanded urban bounding," said Bonnette, noting one group wants to add an additional 40,000 people. "But the Town must resist those appeals regardless of cost to try and protect our small town fabric and have incremental managed growth—and not become the wild west of the GTA."

- The Cultural Centre/Georgetown library renovation and expansion beginning in 2011—the delay in construction has already upped the project's budget

- Addition of three new ice surfaces and the decommissioning of the Memorial Arena—developers have agreed to pay an extra \$1,000/unit on every new home built to help pay for this. An option agreement on seven acres of land beside the Gellert Centre has also been signed with Fernbrook.

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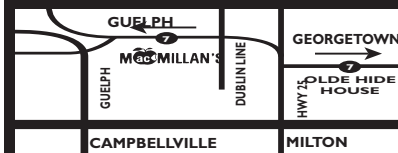
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