

Halton Hills recognized for sustainability initiatives

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The Town of Halton Hills has been recognized on a national level for its sustainability initiatives.

The Town's Office of Sustainability has been hard at work discovering and implementing new ways to keep Halton Hills energy efficient. Over the past decade, the Town has been awarded a number of different honours for its energy efficiency strategies, and has gained national attention for the initiatives.

The following are the awards the Town has won because of its sustainability initiatives:

- Community Conservation Award
- Low Impact Development
- Community Sustainability Strategy
- CAMA National Municipal Environment Award
- Smart Commute Workplace
- Certificate of Merit Credit Valley Conservation
- Smart Commute Halton Employer of the Year
- Stewardship Award Conservation Halton
- Conservation Award Credit Valley Conservation
- Award of Distinction Credit Valley Conservation
- Friends of the Credit Award Credit Valley Conservation
- WWF Canada Recognition Plaque

In 2007, mayor Rick Bonnette started a green plan task force, comprised of a number of different community stakeholders to battle greenhouse gas emissions and to make Halton Hills more energy efficient. The board was asked to come up with a green plan, and after six months, 70 recommendations were brought to council.

One of the recommendations was to set up an office or a dedicated resource to the environment, and a year later, the Office of Sustainability was born.

From there, we started developing different plans and policies, not just looking

at the environment, but looking at social issues, such as youth and senior needs, economic issues and cultural enrichment, Damian Szybalski, economic development and corporate policy advisor with the town, said.

One of the first policies the office implemented was the community sustainability strategy: a longterm vision for the Town until 2060.

The vision reads: In 2060, the urban and rural communities of Halton Hills balance economic prosperity with a deep commitment to the natural environment, while retaining viable local agriculture and small-town feel, and being socially equitable, culturally vibrant and strongly connected.

The strategy was first introduced to the town in 2015 and the office has been working on projects to implement it into the community in a number of different ways one of which being the green development standards.

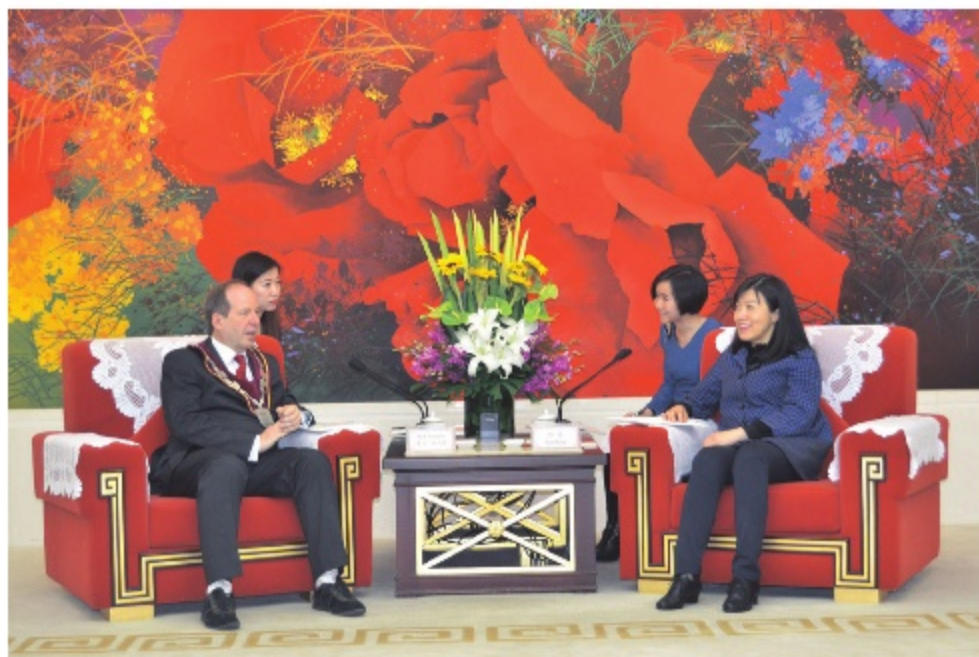
Any new development in Halton Hills has a checklist of green initiatives to implement into the project, each item worth a certain amount of points.

In the end, it means that building is much more efficient than the minimum building code, acting manager of sustainability Gabriel Clarke explained. It's more sustainable. It's more energy efficient, more water efficient, more trees, maybe less parking, better water quality, a lot of different ways.

Along with the green development standards, the Town has also come up with a corporate energy plan for existing government buildings to make them more efficient, as well as a corporate sustainable building policy for new constructing or renovating older buildings.

In 2016, the Town created the green development leadership awards. These awards recognize developers who implement the green development standards and recognizes excellence and innovation in green development.

The awards were held this past January, and six developers were recognized for implementing the standards. These awards will continue annually for many years to come.



As part of Town of Halton Hills trade mission delegation last year, Mayor Rick Bonnette engaged in discussions with Tian Rong (right), Vice Mayor of Chengdu Municipal Peoples Government as a Letter of Intent was signed to establish friendly relations and cooperation between Halton Hills and Wenjiang District, located in the Municipality of Chengdu China.

File Photo

Soon, the Town will be implementing the corporate energy plan, and part of that is procuring an energy information system.

It's a piece of software that allows us to do a whole bunch of manipulation of our utility consumption data, Clarke explained. For example, the energy consumption of the local Public Works building can be documented and compared to other Public Works buildings in different municipalities.

It's a very important tool for doing energy efficiency upgrades that provide maximum environmental benefit and optimal options for repair.

The Town has also come up with a climate change adaptation plan.

We already know now we are experiencing longer periods of drought and extended precipitation, higher than average annual temperatures, and more extreme weather events, Clarke explained. So as a municipality, we're suggesting and council

has suggested its responsible risk management to develop a climate change adaptation plan so that we can plan for an adapt to those climate change consequences.

All of these initiatives have gained the attention of countries all over the world. In 2016, the Town of Halton Hills signed a twinning agreement with the Wenjiang District of Chengdu, China after the district expressed interest in the Town's green initiatives.

They're really interested in learning about how we do sustainable community planning here, Szybalski said. We have a good reputation in Ontario, Canada, and beyond.

Residents are invited to participate by going green, and can do so in a number of ways, including installing rain gardens, disconnecting the down-spouts from the storm water system, and doing site-specific storm water management.

It's one of those things that we will be exploring, Clarke said.



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