

Ontario Lieutenant Governor visits Halton Hills

By: Vivien Fleisher and Alex Hilson

Sustainability and climate change were top of mind during a closed roundtable discussion last Tuesday, April 10 at the Helson Gallery in Georgetown. Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth Dowdeswell partook in the session along with Mayor Rick Bonnette and several council representatives. Talks focused on United Nations (U.N.) Sustainable Development Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities.

At a reception in the gallery afterwards, the Mayor thanked Dowdeswell, as benefactor Fred Helson looked on. Dowdeswell is on a “journey of citizen engagement” across the province, and in her remarks, she shared that she arrived extra early that day to look around, saying, “You can tell a lot in those first few minutes, and one of the things that I came away thinking was that this community was a community that really cared.” She was struck by the pride of ownership across the town, adding she could see “that people cared about the history. The architecture is able to incorporate the old and the new. And they care about the environment; I didn’t go more than a block or two without seeing a grove of trees.” These observations fed into the larger narrative of community through environmental stewardship, inclusive economic prosperity and growth, and



Mayor Rick Bonnette and Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth Dowdeswell holding wood Halton Hills Library cards at reception. - Alex Hilson photo

social cohesion, connecting the dots between them before concluding Halton Hills “is a just and sustainable community.” A native of Saskatchewan, she noticed Halton Hills had flags at half-mast for the Humboldt Broncos tragedy and sees a connection with the two provinces, remarking that they seem to share the same sort of DNA. Mayor Bonnette echoed this idea by adding, “We are the unofficial most patriotic town in Canada, with just over 57,000 flags in a community of just over 60,000” in a reference to the Canada 150 Flag Challenge last year.

The Sustainable Development Goals are a set of 17 global goals developed take over from the U.N.’s Millennium Development Goals which ended in 2015. The goals are interrelated with a unifying theme to end poverty.

“The roundtable we had today was an exchange of ideas and stories,” said Mayor Bonnette. “It’s all part of our freedoms and rights and we’re pleased that in our democracy we can have these sorts of discussions.”

Making heritage happen at Acton Town Hall Centre

By: Vivien Fleisher

Halton Heritage Exchange, in association with “The Heart of Ontario” (Hamilton-Halton-Brant Regional Tourism Association) held their annual conference at Acton’s Town Hall Centre last Thursday. The day-long event focused on bringing together “cultural sector partners to a day of professional development and information exchange”, which loosely translated meant that heritage and historical society members, museum and arts society professionals, archivists and so on could get together and cross pollinate over breakfast, lunch, several talks and workshops.

The venue was ideal; described online as “a heritage showpiece of days gone by... restored to its former grandeur”, the hall has been going strong for four years, hosting over 250 events since opening.

Halton Region Heritage Services manager and curator John Summers

opened the conference with the theme “The state of Heritage: The View from Halton”, and the underlying message was that the entire sector is in a state of flux. The cost of operating museums and related institutions is now referred to as ‘unsustainable’ given the double whammy of precarious funding and low attendance. Like many things pre-internet, they have to compete with by assimilating what the internet has to offer but getting there is what drove the theme. The prevailing response is that institutions need to reach outward to audiences that used to come to them. This is where resource sharing and online resources makes sense, even if the getting-there is tricky.

In the meantime, some developments were pretty impressive. “Almost Like Being There” was presented by Oakville Museum supervisor Julian Kingston. “Visitors” insert their phones into an inexpensive cardboard viewer, log into a spe-

cial VR museum website and experience almost everything the museum has to offer. 3D printing of artifacts enhances this approach with unlimited educational possibilities.

Local presenters included Nassagaweya Historical Society’s Audrey Allison, introducing attendees to “Who We Are”; Halton Black History Awareness Society’s Dennis Scott on “Celebrating Emancipation”; and Shawn Brown, history teacher at Acton High School, who may have stolen the show with his presentation on the school’s recent “Lockers of History” project. Explaining he wanted to go beyond science fair boards, the grade 10 applied history teacher came up with the idea of expanding students’ notions of history by having them select an artifact from their own lives and creating a locker display about it. The hardest part was convincing them they had something historical, but the results were exquisite.

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