Mayor addresses state of town at annual Halton Hills Mayor's Luncheon

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Halton Hills Mayor Rick Bonnette took a look back at the past year and gave an update on the town's overall state of affairs during the annual Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce Mayor's Luncheon on Tuesday (Dec. 12).

The sold-out event hosted at Eagle Ridge Golf Club saw chamber members, residents and dignitaries gather for the mayor's address. In addition to the town's 10 councillors, the event, sponsored by CN, was also attended by the mayors of neighbouring communities and Halton Region Chair Gary Carr.

Carrying the theme of "shared values," the mayor spoke for about half an hour on a number of elements surrounding the town's daily operations and council's overall vision. He also took some time to thank individual members of council and staff for their efforts.

"I felt that 'shared values' was an appropriate theme - particularly given that this has been an historic and exciting time as Canada's 150th year. Now more than ever, I can feel a sense of patriotic pride that we all evoke as Canadians, and fundamental to our nationality is equality, fairness and respect," said the mayor in his speech.

Following that theme, Bonnette paid tribute to organizers and residents for helping Halton Hills earn the title of "Canada's Most Patriotic Town" this past summer.

He was, of course, referring to the initiative spearheaded by the Chamber of Commerce that saw the most Canadian flags flown in one town on Canada Day. Residents and businesses across town flew more than 57,000 flags on Canada's 150th birthday, shattering the previous record and earning Halton Hills the title.

From there, the mayor moved on to more pragmatic issues including the town's finances and 2018 tax levy. He also touched on some of the major projects planned for next year.

"The 2018 budget has been passed with an overall tax increase of 2.4 per cent, including regional, school board services. It includes a significant investment in various assets such as replacement of vehicles, equipment, repairs to roads, parks and trees. The budget includes monies for the construction of the Georgetown Sports Action Park at Gellert, additional bike lanes and pedestrian crossings," he said, adding the budget also includes monies for a number of plans and studies.

The mayor then touched on some of the projects completed or started in 2017, and some of the major developments undertaken as the town continues to grow. Most noteworthy among these developments is the Vision Georgetown plan, which will see major development through the addition of a new neighbourhood planned for 19,000 new residents by 2031.

Bonnette also spent significant time highlighting the growing economic and cultural relationship between Halton Hills and its sister city in Wenjiang, China.

This past year saw the relationship grow through delegations sent by each community. In September, the mayor and members of council and town staff paid a visit to Wenjiang, where they met with local politicians and business leaders and took part in a sustainable growth conference.

The mayor also spoke fondly of a recent visit to Chicago, where he was asked to attend a mayor's conference on sustainability and climate change. The invitation was a recognition of Halton Hills' efforts on these issues. The event was attended by former U.S. president Barack Obama.

The mayor closed his address with a bit of a surprise before offering parting well wishes for the season, announcing he remains undecided about seeking re-election in 2018. He made it clear he has not yet decided either way and would inform residents of his decision in the spring.

Graeme Frisque/Metroland Media

From left: Mayor Rick Bonnette, Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce chair Melanie Frazer and CN Ontario community affairs lead, Drew Redden, pose for a photo following the mayor's address at the annual Chamber of Commerce Mayor's Luncheon.