

Mayor Bonnette reviews first year in office

Continued from last week

The New Tanner asked Mayor Rick Bonnette to review his first year in office by answering a series of questions. This is the second and last instalment of the mayor's replies.

Q: Describe the relationship you have built with your council during the first year in office, and your style of being "boss."

A: I believe I have a great relationship with my council. I have an open door policy with them and I work on a consensus. It is important to be fair. I have worked with four previous mayors before I was elected to this position. One of the criticisms of some of the past mayors was councillors felt they were left out of the loop on issues (particularly issues in their ward).

I inform them, for the most part of important issues in their ward. We have had ward meetings in my office to discuss issues in their ward.

I also invite the ward councillors to all photo ops. This wasn't a past practice of previous Mayors. I feel it is important to them to get to know of new business opening up in their ward.

Also, every two weeks I have a meeting with the two Regional Councillors Jane Fogal and Clark Somerville to discuss the Regional agendas.

When we only have three voices at the Region, I believe that we should have a consensus when we go to Regional council. We may disagree from time to time and that is democracy. As long as we respect each other's opinions. For the most part I have a laid back attitude but I can be tough if needed.

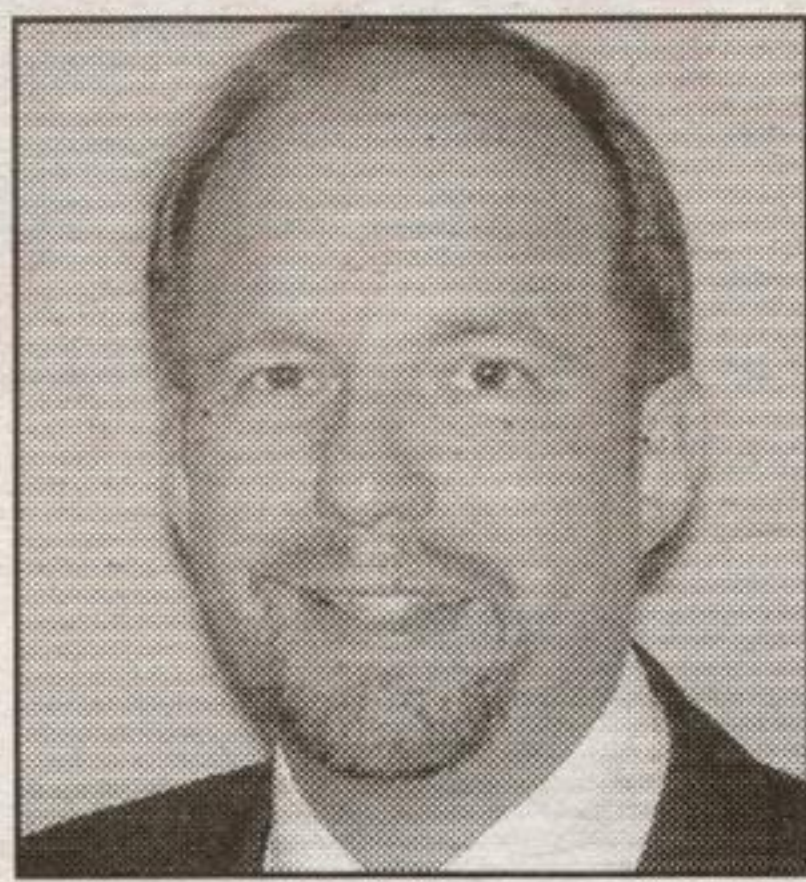
Q: What would you like to accomplish in the next two years, and how will you try to fulfil those plans?

A: I would like to ensure that the development of the 401/407 Gateway Business Park becomes a reality. The decision of Mold Masters to locate there and council's decision to invest \$1.5 million will act as a catalyst for high quality development. I anticipate over the next two years we will see several industrial buildings proceed. We need jobs in our community and we need industrial and commercial growth. Our economic development office has developed a marketing campaign for industrial expansion and my office, council and staff will work collectively to get the message out that Halton Hills is the place to locate.

I would like to see our Acton water allocation resolved so that we can concentrate on getting industry in Acton as well as office space for doctors.

I am working on a fundraiser for the Youth Centre as well as I hope to see the skateboard park built.

Q: What has surprised



Mayor Rick Bonnette

you most about being mayor? What do you like best, and least?

A: The biggest surprise is how rich we are in our community by our volunteers. We have so many organizations that commit so much to our town to make it a great place to live. There are 52 weeks in a year and I can tell you last year there have been over 90 functions from annual general meetings of many organizations to actual events. We have a wealth of talent in our community.

What I like the best is all of the interesting people I have met since taking over the job. A pleasant surprise is how well I have been received in all parts of Halton Hills.

What I like best is resolving issues and helping people. Also, I like the planning for our community particular (sic) working on Economic Development.

Another surprise is the number of emails I receive from the public and letters. I try to answer all of them in a timely fashion. The more technical questions I do refer to staff.

I guess what I like the least is the amount of conflicts from neighbours. You'd be surprised how many neighbour conflicts there are. It is unfortunate, for whatever reason, these conflicts come up.

Q: Can Halton Hills have a strong voice in planning – can it fight urban sprawl – in light of provincial plans for managed growth?

A: The Town of Halton Hills has always had a strong voice in planning. Example the Region's Halton Urban Structure Plan confirmed the Town's past position for planned growth: Georgetown 50,000, Acton 10,000, rural area 10,000 and the industrialization of the 401 corridor.

The new Green Belt plan in many instances reflects our current policy initiatives and the Town's strategic plan. Our town will continue with it efforts to ensure that communities within the Green Belt are scaled to a size to reflect the character of those communities in a Green Belt setting.

I have been against urban sprawl which was my tough stand during last year's election. Now we have a new planner at the table, the Province. The Regional and Area Municipality plan review exercise can be staged in a manner to phase long term growth, balance and short

term growth needs.

The Town has retained its urban boundaries since the mid 1980's with the idea that planned growth would be contained inside these boundaries. We have been successful in the past and in that regard and we would expect to provide the same stewardship in the future.

Q: Halton Region is 30 years old. Is Regional government working to the benefit of Acton taxpayers?

A: Definitely, it has taken some time but I think gradually people are not feeling the same disconnect from the Region as some of the residents in our town felt in the early years of Regional government.

In the last few years we have had a \$7- million upgrade to our sewers. This summer the region spent almost \$2-million on the water and wastewater mains for the downtown Acton core. We now have a 24-hour ambulance service.

Last year, the Region put in an epoxy liner, which was not budgeted, in the Lakeview subdivision that was close to \$600,000. This gave local residents quality water to wash and drink. Also the region has helped with economic growth (401 corridor). The region has an excellent credit rating. This benefits the town as we can borrow from the region at a lower cost. Also the Region was an ally when we opposed the Acton landfill many years ago.

One thing that residents may not be aware of is that a huge component of the Region's budget is for police.

Q: Give yourself a performance grade, from A to F, on the following items: taxation, environmental protection, ratepayer communications, managing the Town and balancing public and private life.

A: I cannot grade myself, as this is something that the public will do at the election.



CONGRATULATIONS: Acton Figure skating coach Vicki Newman, centre, congratulates two of her students, Ashley MacPherson, left, and Sarah Cunningham, right, on their medal performances at skating competitions at Keswick and Grimsby recently. Ashley was a Silver Medallist at Keswick while Sarah won a Bronze Medal at Grimsby. Ashley was fourth in preliminary elements at Keswick, second in preliminary free skate and sixth in introductory interpretive. At Grimsby she was fourth in preliminary free skate and ninth in introductory interpretive. Sarah was third in preliminary free skate at Grimsby and tenth in introductory interpretive. At Keswick Sarah notched a sixth in preliminary elements and seventh in preliminary free skate and introductory interpretive. – Submitted photo.

I can give comments on each subject.

•Taxation- We were looking at a 10% tax increase last year. I broke tradition when I became the first Mayor in Halton Hills history to become chair of the budget. We came in at a 5.8% increase with 2% dedicated for nothing else but our roads.

•Protecting the environment- Last year we put in an aggressive pesticide reduction program at a cost of close \$75,000. Staff is presently working, under my direction, on an energy reduction program to conserve energy in our Town buildings. We are looking at experimenting with electric vehicles to reduce emissions.

Lastly, we are currently looking at the Hungry Hollow Management Plan to finalize trails and park space as well as looking at acquiring land in the Acton area for

a future community park.

•Communicating with ratepayers- I have been consistent with a mayor's column as well as receiving an average of 7 emails, one letter and about four phone calls daily from the public. I answer all of them. I have an open door policy and I intend to keep it this way.

•Managing the town – I believe staff morale is up and we are not losing the staff that we were a few years back. With the help of councillors we have many town committees working together on making our town safe. Some

committees are the Fire Master Plan, Town Accessibility, I sit on emergency planning, to name a few.

•Balancing public and private life- You may want to ask my wife Josey (joking). The job has many long days averaging 12 hours a day, sometimes longer. I try to book certain weekends in my calendar when I can but sometimes it is not easy with so many functions and most of them on weekends. I still manage to have my Friday nights free, for the most part, to coach ladies hockey in Acton.

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