

What taxpayers can expect from Region this term

Regional Chair delivers inaugural address at first meeting of new regional council

By Christina Commisso
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Free rain barrels, bus passes for Ontario Works recipients and a greater emphasis on social media are some of the things Halton residents can expect from regional council this term.

During his inaugural speech Wednesday, Regional Chair Gary Carr outlined Halton's achievements in the last four years and what he'd like to see come from council chambers during the next four years. Carr also made note of a couple new programs that could be rolled out with council's approval.

In the finance, environmental and safety categories, the Region has achieved top grades with Carr at the helm of council. He reminded those in attendance that for the third year running, Maclean's Magazine has named Halton as the safest place to live in the GTA and the safest regional municipality in Canada.

With a total residential tax increase of less than half a per cent over four years, Halton has achieved a AAA credit rating, which Carr said he hopes to maintain. This year saw a zero per cent tax increase and regional staff is

poised to deliver a second consecutive zero increase budget for 2011.

"Even in the era of taxes freezes, Halton has still enjoyed enhanced programs and services including weekly blue box collection, green cart collection, enhanced and new water and wastewater facilities and a new air quality monitoring program," the acclaimed chair told the audience.

Another A came in the environmental department, with Halton Region having the highest waste diversion rate in the GTA.

"Over 60 per cent of residential waste is now being diverted," said Carr. "What that means is 27,000 less tons of garbage and 1,700 fewer trucks going to the landfill." He said as a result of the programs the Halton landfill has extended its life expectancy by nine years.

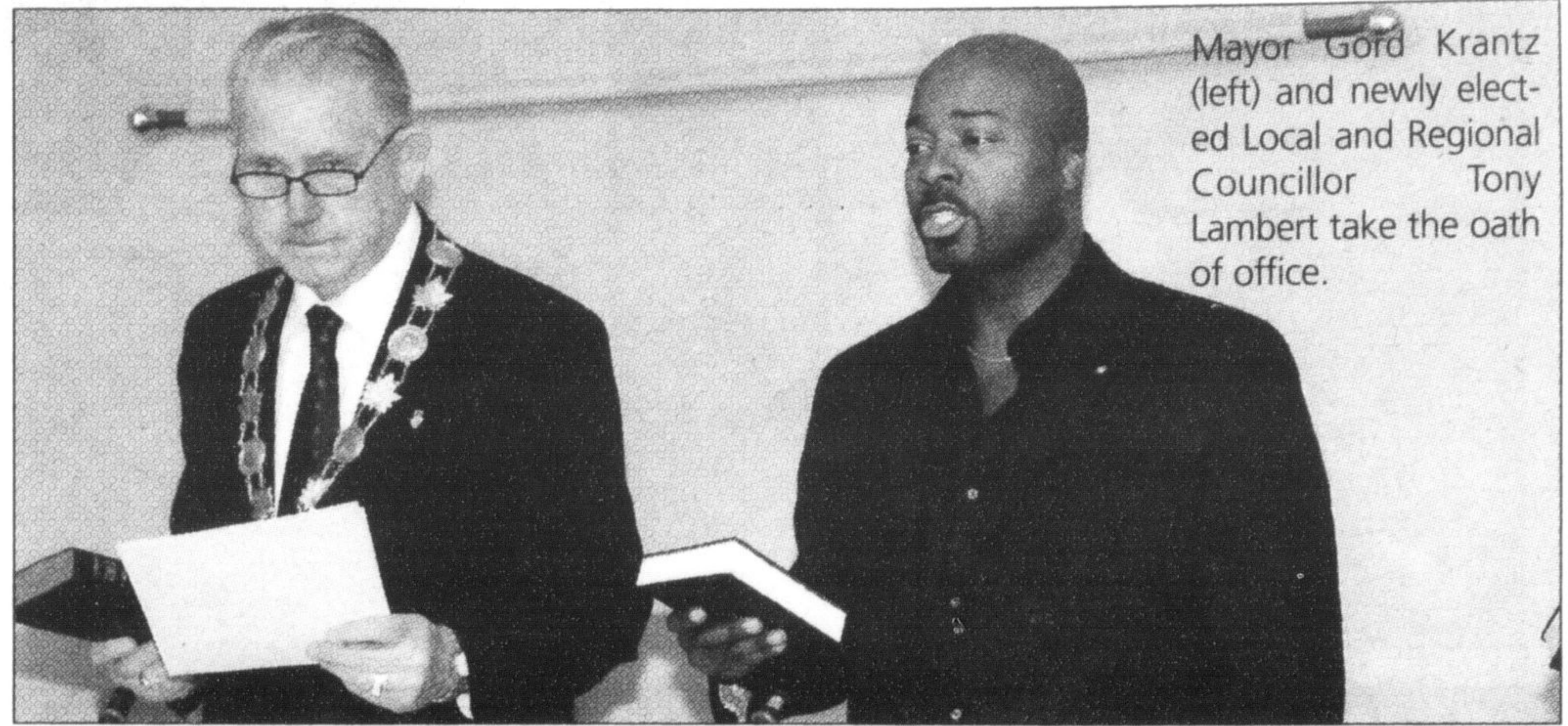
In 2009 and 2010 the Region rolled out a pilot rain barrel program, which saw 11,000 barrels sold. This translates to 1.2 million liters of municipal water saved each year. "It's incredible that something as simple as a rain barrel can have such a dramatic result," he said.

Carr said he plans to introduce a new program that would see a rain barrel come with each new home in Halton. He said the program will be funded through development charges.

Employment was another topic Carr touched upon during his address.

"We've been told that access to transportation is often a barrier in some residents'

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Mayor Gord Krantz (left) and newly elected Local and Regional Councillor Tony Lambert take the oath of office.



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