

# Philpott keen on healthy side of budget

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Health is the mother of the federal budget.

During her time in West Africa, federal health minister and Markham-Stouffville MP Jane Philpott heard the saying "health is the mother of everything" and she believes the federal budget reflects that.

That was one of several points she made at the Stouffville Chamber of Commerce's annual mayor's dinner last week at Sleepy Hollow golf club. Philpott delivered a speech stressing the importance of health in investments planned by the federal government.

"We can't have a strong economy if we don't have strong health," the Stouffville resident said. "Everything in the budget is about health, everything we're doing to invest in the future of this country is going to help the health of Canadians."

*She almost came to tears as she spoke of the substance abuse and mental health issues*

Among budget items were investments in health research, health services in indigenous communities, electronic health records, and immunization programs for children.

She stressed that Canada's drug policy needed a new approach. She almost came to tears as she spoke of the substance abuse and mental health issues in the country.

"The old approach wasn't working," she said. "Our approach is based on evidence and public

health."

"Problematic substance use is a health problem," she added.

A middle class tax cut will decrease taxes for 9 million Canadians, roughly a third of the population. Philpott told guests at the dinner – some of whom are in the one per cent earning bracket – that they would be taking a hit.

"It allows us to give those Canadians an average of \$330 per year in their pockets," she said.

According to the budget, 300,000 fewer Canadians will live in poverty, compared to 2014.

Investments in housing, transit, seniors and children also relate to health, Philpott explained. Seniors will receive an extra \$1,000 per year due to an increase in the guaranteed income supplement and families will receive a tax-free Canada child benefit.

"All of us in the room benefit when Canadians in general do better, I'm proud that the budget recognizes that," Philpott said.

She also made the connection between good, affordable housing and mental health, showing how the two are correlated to wellbeing.

Describing health as the bedrock on which communities grow and prosper, she said "you can't do much if you're not in good health".

Responding to criticisms of the federal budget, she said Canada has the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7, which puts the country in better shape for "necessary" investments for long-term benefits.

Reflecting on her appointment as federal health minister, Philpott said she tries to come back to Stouffville any chance she gets as it keeps her "grounded."

Philpott is the first medical doctor to hold the cabinet position of health minister in 80 years.



STAFF PHOTO/ALI RAZA

Mayor Justin Altmann and Health Minister Jane Philpott speak at the mayor's dinner last week at Sleepy Hollow.

## Get ready for more growth: Altmann

Stouffville feels like a family, Mayor Justin Altmann remarked at the Stouffville Chamber of Commerce's annual mayor's dinner last week — and that family is about to get much bigger.

Currently at 46,000 residents, the municipality is expected to grow rapidly in the coming years, reaching 68,000 residents, according to a provincial estimates. With that growth comes an expansion in residential and commercial developments.

"Density could get high," Altmann told guests. "The province has mandated us to review our 209 square kilometres of land, we've submitted the reviews and the province will tell us in April if they've opened up some land for development."

Since roughly 85 per cent of Whitchurch-Stouffville is on the Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine, the province decides what land can be used for new developments.

It's why recent developments remain cornered in the southeast quadrant of the municipality.

Altmann explained that Ward 3 could open up for increased development due to its proximity next to Hwy. 404. He went through the remaining wards identifying growth and development strategies.

Notably, the mayor spoke of the addition to the

library/leisure centre costing \$14 million, due to break ground in September with construction slated to be complete in 2018.

"Stouffville's a happening place," Altmann said. "From China, United States and Dubai, there's so many eyes on the municipality."

"The real estate is hot, the businesses are strong, the community is vibrant, there is a true heartbeat to this town," he added.

Part of what's happening includes Main Street rejuvenation for which the mayor announced the creation of a steering committee to guide the project.

The municipality's growth and development is aimed at expanding the local economy, he said. The mayor mentioned he'd been to 40 to 50 ribbon cuttings in the past year alone, amplifying the effect of business growth in the town.

"Seventy per cent of our residents travel outside Stouffville for work," Altmann said. "I want to see those numbers go down."

The mayor ended his remarks by announcing his wedding date with Jenny Hillier, who was in attendance, set for Aug. 6.

"The whole town's invited," he proudly announced.

—Ali Raza

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