

Mayor addresses packed house at Chamber luncheon

By Mark PavilonsEditor

A record attendance at the mayor's annual business address last week revealed the strength of local business. Hosted by the King Chamber of Commerce, the luncheon featured the mayor's "State of the Township Address," noting all of the accomplishments and milestones in the past year. And there were many, attesting to the growth and vibrancy of the local economy. As the Chamber's ranks continually to fill almost weekly, the local business community is on solid footing to continue to make inroads. Chamber President Michelle Frauley said we are seeing challenges for companies in 2023 in the face of inflation, shrinking economies, continued supply chain issues and increased customer expectations for enhanced service experiences. "It is important as a community that we continue to support local businesses. Our aim is to inspire individuals to shop King and uncover the incredible array of businesses within King Township. We want to strengthen our local economy," she said. "The King Chamber is dedicated to continuing to work hard in lobbying and advocacy with the Township of King, York Region, and other levels of government. By collaborating and presenting shared concerns, we can affect more substantial change in the lives of business owners like yourselves. King Chamber is your business resource centre ?? we can assist in obtaining grants to help with hiring and training, business expansion, R & D and more. The King Chamber continues to work with the Economic Development team at the Township to promote and market tourism in King via the "Experience King" brand. In his address, Mayor Pellegrini noted a lot has happened over the last year, not the least of which was emerging from a global pandemic. "I'm proud of the resilience shown by our business community during the single-largest economic challenge of our lifetimes. You made tremendous sacrifices and many changes to keep your doors open and on behalf of the community that relies on your many services, I'd like to say thank you." He noted King just released the results of its first-ever citizen survey which was conducted in February. The random survey, conducted by Ipsos, is considered statistically significant, this means it can be considered an accurate representation of the entire Township. The three most important issues facing the municipality identified by respondents in an open-ended question were: taxation and user fees; traffic congestion; and urban development and complete communities. "I hear from people all the time what a fantastic place King is so it's gratifying to see this revealed by the survey. We will take time to look at the results to see what we're doing well and find opportunities to make King an even better place to live, work and play." The mayor pointed to the implementation of the Official Plan, "Our King," the first major overhaul of this important document in 40 years. The Official Plan establishes a comprehensive, long-term vision for the future of the Township and will guide growth in the Township's villages, hamlets and rural areas. It addresses the Township's long-term planning requirements to the year 2031 and brings the Township into conformity with recent Provincial and upper-tier land use policy directions. The Township is just wrapping up year four of its Corporate Strategic Plan. The mayor noted this is the very first term of council for which a strategic plan has been established and presented to the community. "Having a strategic plan ensures that everything we do is driving us forward in the right direction. We've been keeping score as we go along too, delivering annual progress reports to the community. Staff is now working on the next version of the plan." Council managed to hold the line on the municipal portion of taxes during the pandemic because we knew how many people and businesses were struggling financially during the extended lockdowns. The average increase for the Township portion of municipal tax was 1.11% for the period between 2018 and 2022, positioning King as having the lowest tax increases in the GTA. "The one area we will continue to work on is attracting new business to King. Right now we have a very high residential-to-commercial tax base compared to municipalities to the south of us. If we can attract more commercial and industrial businesses to King, we'll be able to spread taxes more evenly between the three sectors." King continues to make capital improvements to our infrastructure. This includes park and trail redevelopment, drainage improvements, watermain and sewer upgrades, stormwater works, and bridge and culvert rehabilitation. "The paving of local roads in King is a priority. Since 2019, almost 40 kilometres of roads were converted from gravel to paved surface, and almost 60 kilometres were upgraded with asphalt improvements and surface treatments." In King, we are committed to keep working with the private sector and other levels of government to ensure our residents and businesses have the internet access they need for work and personal use. Since 2019, there has been a 47 per cent increase in homes with access to newly available broadband and 120 kilometres of fibre has installed in municipal right of ways. "We also recently received the good news that more than \$48 million in funding from the governments of Canada and Ontario will be coming to York Region for more high-speed internet. The money will go to YorkNet, a corporation

owned by the Regional Municipality of York, to bring high-speed internet access to over 3,800 homes in 31 Ontario communities. That will include homes in King City, Lloydtown, Nobleton and Pottageville. Construction is well under way on King's Township-Wide Recreation Centre, a multi-partner project, with an opening date set for 2024. The centre is being constructed on 25 acres of land at the southeast corner of Seneca's King Campus at Dufferin Street and the 15th Sideroad. The centre will be a state-of-the-art, carbon neutral, fully accessible recreation complex with two NHL-sized ice surfaces, a six-lane 25-metre lap pool, a leisure pool, a multi-purpose athletic fieldhouse and a multi-purpose community room. The athletic fieldhouse will include an artificial turf field, a three-lane walking/running track, fitness equipment and a multi-purpose court consisting of basketball, volleyball and pickleball. Site servicing is nearly complete, the pool is 30 per cent done and the two rinks have been started. The updated Community Improvement Plan (CIP) targets specific areas within the Township and assists eligible businesses to receive grant funding for various initiatives such as new signage and accessibility features. The Township has also updated its Community Tourism Plan. The development of the plan began in early 2020 before the COVID-19 pandemic began and had to be put on hold while King Economic Development pivoted to support our businesses in new and innovative ways. The 2021 Community Tourism Plan starts at the foundation and works its way up. The focus begins with assisting tourism-related businesses and stakeholders achieve success for themselves through education and leadership. The current Economic Development Strategy is now being wrapped up. It was focused on investment readiness, business attraction, retention and expansion while leveraging our economic sector and business strengths. Pellegrini pointed out that "transformational changes" are coming to King City and Nobleton's village cores. Earlier this year, Community Services reported about moving the Nobleton Library to the frontage on Highway 27 and re-imagining an Old King Road downtown village core. Block plan studies will be developed for both Doctors Lane in King City and Old King Road in Nobleton to guide these transformations. "It's clear we've been extremely busy over the last several years doing our best to support our local businesses," the mayor concluded. Frauley thanked the event's sponsors, which included Nicola Blackwood Realty Advisors, Nobleton Family Dental, Dr. Diane Contino, Unlimited HRM Solutions (Carmelinda Galota), Signature Communities and Clearway Group "Anthony Di Battista, Bayview Concierge and Let's Talk Cannabis (Sherry Bennett), Hard at Work (Ellen McCarthy) and two new sponsors Bluepoint Jewellery and Findings and Unlimited HRM Solutions. Welcome to all 45 new members in 2023. How awesome is that?" Frauley also praised the King Weekly Sentinel for its "continued support with your coverage of community and business events." She noted the Chamber has monthly events planned "check the calendar on their website.