

Halton Hills' Councillor Moya Johnson wins national "Local Hero" Award

For Immediate Release: May 21, 2009

Toronto, Ontario – Moya Johnson's career as a nurse may have been the incentive for Halton Hills' Mayor Rick Bonnette to ask her to head up Council's accessibility committee, but it was her personal drive that created changes in her community that other city councils around the country envy. It has won her the Canadian Urban Institute's (CUI) 2009 Local Hero Award to be presented June 5 in Toronto at the Urban Leadership Awards (ULA).

"Councillor Moya Johnson became the voice in her community for a lot of people who often don't have a voice and don't know how the bureaucracy works. Her most well known advancement was to make Halton Hills Council meetings more accessible by having closed captioning available on the cable broadcast. For a small council that was an incredible commitment that other councils across the country would like to emulate," said CUI President and CEO Glen Murray.

About 500 elite members of Canada's who's who of city building will gather in Toronto on June 5 at the Royal York Hotel to honour [Moya Johnson](http://www.town.halton-hills.on.ca/townhall/councillors.php) (<http://www.town.halton-hills.on.ca/townhall/councillors.php>) and [17 other groups and individuals](http://www.canurb.com/awards/ula/leadershipawards2009.php) (www.canurb.com/awards/ula/leadershipawards2009.php) across the country that are making Canadian cities exciting and dynamic places to live and work.

Among its many accomplishments Councillor Johnson's accessibility committee has put visual fire alarms in all public buildings so the hearing impaired can see that a fire alarm has gone off. The committee has changed the doors in arenas and the council building to automated sliding doors. It has relaxed the criteria for the Access Van to include people who are simply are not well enough to use public transit for things like getting to doctors' appointments. And the committee is even doing a sidewalk survey to see where sidewalks need to be repaired to make them easier for people in wheelchairs or with walkers.

For Johnson the last five years of work has included increasing awareness among the general public.

"When you look at a lot of these advancements they really improve accessibility for all of us. When your arms are full with a computer bag and books then the big heavy doors are not very accessible. We could all use sliding doors in public buildings," said Johnson.

"We know we're doing something right because we've had numerous calls from other municipalities looking to see how we brought in closed captioning, just as one example," Johnson added.

The Urban Leadership Awards (ULA) Program honors Canadian individuals, groups and organizations that have made significant contributions to improving the quality of life in Canada's cities and urban regions. The 2009 ULA's have been made possible by the generous support of a variety of corporate sponsors including Gold Sponsors Loblaw Properties Ltd., Scotiabank, TD Bank Financial Group, the Ontario Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure, Environics, the City of Toronto, GE Canada and the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE). Community Builder Sponsors include Toronto Hydro, Local 27 of the Union of Carpenters and Allied Workers, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and Great West Life, London Life and Canada Life Assurance Companies.

The judges for this year's awards included Canadians who have dedicated their lives to public service and who have detailed knowledge of the local stories and triumphs of Canadians in their home communities. Under the chairmanship of the Hon. David Crombie, the committee included; Al Duerr, former Mayor of Calgary; Newfoundland's Dr. Linda Inkpen; Dr. Antonia Maioni, Director of the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada; John Kim Bell, founder of the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation; Ms. Mitzie Hunter, a Vice President at Goodwill Industries; and, Dr. Nola Kate Seymoar, President and CEO, International Centre for Sustainable Cities, based in British Columbia.

The Canadian Urban Institute (CUI) is a non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing the quality of life in urban areas across Canada and throughout the world.

For more information or interviews:

Janis Lynch, Manager Urban Leadership Awards, Canadian Urban Institute
p: 416-365-0816, ext 283, c. 416-986-1771 email: jlynch@canurb.com

Moya Johnson, Halton Hills, Ontario
p. 905-873-2600, email: moyajohnson@cogeco.ca

Some facts about Moya Johnson and The Halton Hills Accessibility Committee

- Moya Johnson is a Senior Health Planner for the Child Health Network for Greater Toronto Area in Toronto.
- She has served on Council since 1994 and participated in many committees which have positive impact on the community including the creation of the Fire Service Action Plan, Business Licensing Committee and the Halton Hills Accessibility Committee (HHAC)
- HHAC is one of the most proactive municipal accessibility committees under her leadership. In 2005 it completed 10 town facility surveys, a comprehensive Disabled Persons Parking Study, community consultations to create awareness about accessibility issues, and developed a process for public feedback on accessibility issues.
- In 2005 the committee created a meaningful dialogue with businesses to help them understand the underserved market sector of people with disabilities.
- The Town of Halton Hills was the first municipality to voluntarily offer closed captioning for televised council meetings.
- In addition Johnson has sought to draw attention to the preservation of rural heritage as a member of the Heritage Halton Hills Committee, recently resulting in Council awarding heritage designation to the Barber Mill site.