

Emond honoured for role in community centre



Former mayor Ron Emond, surveyed a crowd of more than 200 people as they arrived at the Hastings Highlands Community Centre, on Wednesday, Dec. 16, for the Maynooth Public School concert. During his term as mayor, Emond allocated all of his salary into a reserve and his contributions were recognized on Wednesday night by the honorarium committee. Photo by Sarah Vance

By Sarah Vance

On Dec. 16, the Hastings Highlands honorarium committee unveiled new purchases, before an audience gathered to celebrate the Maynooth Public School Christmas concert. Local trustee Lucille Kyle provided accompaniment on the piano with Jesse Hanna providing lighting and sound services for the evening.

There were more than 200 people in the municipal gymnasium, as former Hastings Highlands mayor Ron Emond, also in attendance, was recognized by the honorarium committee for his contributions towards envisioning and planning what is now known as the Hastings Highlands Community Centre.

A little known fact about Emond is that during his term and a half as Hastings Highlands mayor, he allocated all of his salary back into a reserve, which was held in trust and designated for future use by the municipal facility.

"Ron left the municipality a legacy from his time as our mayor which is close to a \$100,000 donation," said Lorraine Fell, former Hastings Highlands councillor in an interview with Bancroft This Week. "I do not know of any other mayor in Ontario who has done this during their term and the results have been truly remarkable."

There was only standing room at the Hastings Highlands Centre on Wednesday night, at 6:30 p.m., with every chair occupied and families lined up against the walls to see the Maynooth school children perform.

"When Ron began initiating the new building one of his primary reasons was to have a gym, so he looked into the cost and priced it out," said Fell, who is also a member of the honorarium committee, and who spoke to Ron's contributions on Wednesday night before the audience. "He wanted his community to have that resource and when he was mayor we would often hear him speaking about equipping the gym with the best in lighting, sound equipment, projectors and movie screens. This included a time when he decided to [order Behringer equipment](#) to really give us the professional edge for the gym."

The honorarium committee has planned and made purchases for the centre over the last two years and using local tenders they have had the new equipment installed. It has taken time for people to be trained in its proper use, with the Maynooth Public School

Christmas concert being a great opportunity for Hastings Highlands residents to see it put into action.

"When Ron first initiated the project he was subjected to a lot of antagonism, which he has always stood up to with a calm persistence," said Dave Eakins, retired president of Beacon Construction, in an interview with Bancroft This Week. "Between Craig Davidson and Ron, so many grants and investors have been involved and during his term as mayor Ron was fully engaged." The Hastings Highlands Centre continues to be a catalyst for development within the town of Maynooth and the surrounding communities.

Emond's decision to place his wages in trust proved to be a strong bargaining tool as he worked to build his vision. It allowed him to come to the table with both the investment and the intent of a leader who is 100 per cent committed.

"The Hastings Highlands Centre has been a poster product of its intent," said Eakins. "Ron was adamant from the start that the building will benefit locals and he meant this right down to its construction with 1,500 local labour hours untaken by 38 local companies."

These local companies executed the task of building the centre with efficiency, including using such equipment as plant trailers to make sure that all work was done to the highest quality. From start to finish the construction of the Hastings Highlands Centre was on time and it came in on budget. It also proposed a plan that the entire building would be paid for by the year 2018.

"On top of that numerous roads were reconstructed, new salt domes and bridges built ? all with minimal municipal contribution because of the federal and provincial grants," said Brent K. Dalgleish, previous Hastings Highlands mayor, in an interview with Bancroft This Week. "The end result was that a new town hall complex, library and gymnasium/multi-purpose room worth more than \$4.5 million was able to be built on 33 cent dollars."

Emond also included measures to ensure that the by-products would be handled sustainably, with even the old municipal building being recycled and sold and then refurbished into a home on the Peterson Road.

"I remember when they lifted the old municipal building up out of the ground," said Fell. "I couldn't believe it, but they were able to do it."

The Hastings Highlands Community Centre has been a catalyst for growth in the community and the audience on Wednesday night applauded Emond as he was recognized by the honorarium committee. The products purchased using Emond's honorarium committee include a LED lighting system; a sound system with cordless microphones and speakers; and a retractable BlueRay movie screen including a DVD player with a dedicated lap top.

"I think Ron's work is a very big deal" said Fell. "And tonight we are really hoping to remind the community of his contributions during his time as mayor."

"Ron served us, and served the County of Hastings as warden for several years and was the chair of the eastern Ontario mayor's caucus committee," said Dalgleish. "The dynamic leadership, generosity and legacy of Mayor Ron Emond will, in my mind, be forever a cornerstone of the municipal structure known as Hastings Highlands."

All of the equipment that was unveiled on Wednesday evening is available for rental use in the Hastings Highlands gym. Miranda Mitchell is the contact at the library to inquire about prices or to make reservations. Jesse Hanna is the information technologist who has been trained in the use of the equipment.

And for sports fans there is also a Rock Solid floor curling kit that includes everything required for a group to simulate a curling rink, without the ice, in the Hastings Highlands gymnasium.