

New Economic Development portal aimed to help businesses recover from pandemic, plant roots in Caledon

By Rob Paul, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Town of Caledon this week launched a new, mobile-friendly website, caledonbusiness.ca. The website is dedicated to supporting both new investment and local business.

It provides support for those who are already running businesses in Caledon and looking for assistance through the support program while also providing information to those looking to invest in Caledon through business opportunities.

"With our distinctive urban/rural/agriculture mix this close to the GTA, Caledon is uniquely positioned to not only attract investment?we also have the quality of life and infrastructure second to none," said Mayor Allan Thompson. "Our business community is dynamic, innovative and diverse, and they're just ready to go, coming out of this pandemic. With this new site?and the help of our Economic Development team?we have a wealth of assistance available."

Featuring in-depth market research and a comprehensive suite of program and service information, the new site is geared to both potential investors and local businesses and demonstrates how the Town is assisting businesses to recover from the pandemic.

The Town highlights several key features in the new website: a business support program for local businesses; resources, programs and services to aid the start, retention and growth of local business; a dedicated section of resources to support businesses recover from the pandemic; and market research, available properties and other data of interest to potential investors.

The business support program is one of the key informative pieces of the website as more and more businesses return to normal after the struggles of the pandemic.

The purpose of the program is to improve communication and understand the issues faced by the Caledon business community?through the website, business owners are able to submit a form addressing the issues they face, and Economic Development will provide information, resources, and support to help the business remain and expand in Caledon.

"It's been a difficult year for local business," said Chief Administrative Officer Carey Herd. "But our #LoveLocalCaledon campaign has demonstrated how supportive this community is, and our Council and staff are ever-ready to engage with our business community, raise awareness of what we do and actively support them."

The 10-year Economic Development Strategy endorsed by Council in 2020 prioritizes improving communications and a user-friendly website dedicated to business. The site received funding support from the Province of Ontario's Rural Economic Development (RED) Program.

The Economic Development Officers of Caledon, Ben Roberts and Sandra Dolson, and Tourism and Culture Officer Emily Quinton are the ecstatic about having another avenue to help businesses come to Caledon and grow by providing guidance through the new website. Giving another avenue for those who need help, especially during the pandemic, is why the Town felt it necessary to debut the new website now.

"Launching a stand-alone business website is an action in our 2020-2030 Economic Development Strategy," said a Town spokesperson. "Given the challenging times our business community has faced during the pandemic, communication with our businesses became a top priority. The website is one tool we are using to ensure we have the most up-to-date information available to assist new entrepreneurs, business owners and investors."

By having a website that's easy to access and navigate, Economic Development sees it being another way to attract business to

Caledon while ensuring those that are already local have as much information as possible to succeed.

"Economic Development strives to assist businesses to start, locate, and expand in Caledon," said the spokesperson. "We know business owners are very busy and don't have time to comb through various webpages to find what they need or to understand who to call for assistance. We're hoping we have provided a clear concise tool that allows easy access to resources and support for business operation and growth."

With the launch of the website, the main priority is to be a guiding hand or a shoulder to lean on when businesses or investors are looking to understand why and how they can find success in Caledon.

"Our primary goal is to reinforce the fact that the experts on our Economic Development team are available for direct, personal service to local businesses," said the spokesperson. "Any business or investor who is looking for information, resources or services just needs to contact us via email (business@caledon.ca) or phone (905-584-2272 x. 5131) and we will respond personally."

As Ontario continues to re-open, the hope is that the Town's businesses will return sooner than later to full capacity and throughout that process, Economic Development hopes businesses will reach out and stay connected through the website to ensure they thrive in Caledon.

"As COVID cases come down and vaccinations accelerate, we are hopeful that a full reopening will happen soon, and that our local economy will fully recover. We encourage local businesspeople to subscribe to 'The Business Report,' the Economic Development team's email newsletter, to stay up to date on events, updates, and further actions from our Economic Development strategy. To subscribe, visit caledon.ca/businessreport."

Visit the new Economic Development website at caledonbusiness.ca and for more information on the Town's business support program visit caledonbusiness.ca/en/business-support/business-support-program.aspx.