

Advocates hail new, overdue aggregate policies in Caledon

Policies adopted at Special Council meeting

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Caledon has adopted new aggregate policies.

After a lengthy supplementary aggregate policy study process, Caledon Councillors voted to adopt new aggregate policies at an October 7 Special Council meeting.

As a result, Caledon's official plan will be updated to prioritize environmental stewardship, infrastructure development and community well-being when it comes to aggregate extraction.

The new policies are two years in the making.

In 2022, a study found Caledon's aggregate policies were the weakest out of all of Ontario's top ten aggregate producing municipalities. Caledon implemented a year-long Interim Control Bylaw to prevent new pits and quarries, which it renewed for a second year, so it could update its aggregate policies.

The Forks of the Credit Preservation Group (FCPG), a local non-profit advocacy group, followed the process closely and advocated for clear, prescriptive, science-based policies throughout.

In a statement, Caledon Mayor Annette Groves said Caledon's new policies are forward-thinking and take into account the needs of a growing community while protecting the environment for future generations.

"A lot of work has gone into this over the years, and I'd like to extend a sincere thank you to our Town of Caledon staff, stakeholders, environmental experts and community members for contributing to this comprehensive study," said Groves.

FCPG member David Sylvester said the group is thrilled Caledon Councillors responded to calls for stronger community protections when it comes to aggregate extraction.

"After enduring for years excessive dust, noise, and traffic from the aggregate industry, policies grounded in cutting-edge science to safeguard our families were long overdue," said Sylvester. "Most notably and in what is thought to be a Canadian first, Caledon adopted the World Health Organization's (WHO) 2021 global air quality guidelines for particulate matter associated with dust from aggregate operations. Many residents and health organizations have long questioned why Canada was sticking to the WHO 2005 limits for PM2.5 when it is a proven carcinogen."

A Town of Caledon news release states the municipality's new policies include provisions to ensure sustainable extraction practices in line with provincial regulations; address community concerns such as air quality, land rehabilitation and water resource and natural heritage area protection; support infrastructure development that benefits the community, including road maintenance and transportation planning; and provide clear guidelines for the review of future aggregate extraction development applications, ensuring transparency and accountability.

Caledon's Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development Eric Lucic said the town has listened closely to the community.

"We believe this policy strikes the right balance between responsible resource use and protecting Caledon's environment, providing

a stable framework for businesses while protecting natural landscapes and local ecosystems," he said in a statement.

A news release from the FCPG states the new policies incorporate the latest scientific research in areas such as air quality standards and monitoring; dewatering and private wells; wetland and woodland protection; safeguarding environmentally sensitive groundwater recharge areas; and requirements for blasting and flyrock management.

The FCPG's legal counsel, David Donnelly, said in a statement that Caledon has become a leader in environmental action through its new policies.

"There's no justification for neglecting critical scientific issues like wetland preservation, climate change and human health. Caledon is setting an example for Ontario," he said.

The FCPG noted in its news release that the journey is not yet over "the group said Caledon residents and councillors must advocate to the Provincial Government to sign off on and approve the new policies.