

Caledon begins planning for impacts of Bill 23]

By Zachary Roman

Caledon has announced its initial plan to mitigate the impacts of the province's Bill 23.

In a January 18 media release, Town staff said Caledon is responding to the bill with "immediate action items" to address the impacts of the bill and ensure Caledon's success. The Town is also asking the province to engage in further communication with municipalities and Indigenous communities before all parts of the bill come into effect.

Bill 23 is the More Homes Built Faster Act from Doug Ford's Progressive Conservatives, and it was passed on November 28, 2022. On November 25, 2022, Caledon Mayor Annette Groves called a special meeting of Council and Council unanimously passed a motion asking the province to halt Bill 23 until more fulsome consultations were completed. Groves said at the time that Bill 23 would leave Caledon unable to meet the needs of its growing community.

Town of Caledon staff have noted the bill would severely impact environmental protection, heritage preservation, public participation, parkland, and Caledon's ability to provide future services, amenities and infrastructure. Staff also said the Bill could negatively impact residents' quality of life and residential tax rates.

In the statement of January 18, Groves said there's many layers of change under Bill 23 and Caledon is working through them carefully to see what they mean for Caledon's future growth.

"Our concerns remain with impacts to our environment, heritage, parkland and ability to plan and fund the infrastructure needed to meet the Province's housing targets," said Groves. "We are doing the work now to help prepare Caledon for a prosperous and successful future, and we will need support from all levels of government, residents and stakeholders to plan for what is important to Caledon."

Antonietta Minichillo, Caledon's Chief Planner, presented to Council at its January 17 Planning and Development Committee meeting on Caledon's initial response to Bill 23. She said the bill would impact Caledon's planning process, and that growth in Caledon requires significant investment in transit, water, wastewater, and infrastructure. She said the Town will look to work with the province on finding funding and creating solutions, as the Province wants Caledon to have 13,000 new residential units by 2031.

Myuran Palasandiran, Caledon's Chief Financial Officer, said Bill 23 presents Caledon with financial challenges, especially as it embarks on its journey of growth.

"The Province has indicated they understand these impacts and will offer new financial tools to assist municipalities with housing-enabling infrastructure funding. Caledon is eager to learn what those tools are," he said.