

Caledon continues to advocate for GO rail service in this area



Through our involvement on the LAS Energy Task Force (an affiliated organization that is part of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario) the Town of Caledon, along with five other municipalities, recently had an opportunity to discuss municipal energy conservation and climate change concerns with Gord Miller, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario (ECO).

The ECO was interested in hearing what the Province should be doing (or not doing) to help municipalities achieve their energy conservation and climate change objectives. It was a wide-ranging conversation, covering a variety of issues.

As a result of Caledon's community climate change efforts, it has become increasingly obvious that a large portion of our community's greenhouse gas emissions result from our residents' reliance on automobiles as the preferred mode of transportation. As Caledon's population grows, so will our car-related greenhouse gas emissions, unless we find alternative modes of transit. For a community like Caledon, GO Transit rail service would be a very effective way to help reduce this problem.

Unfortunately, the Metrolinx Big Move has all but forgotten Caledon in its plans for rail service. This is the result of the Metrolinx decision-making model which establishes the need for rail service based on existing population and density rather than projected population and density.

People are quick to establish their behaviours once they move into a new community. When that behavior is tied to a significant financial investment, such as the purchase of a second family vehicle, driving as opposed to using public transit becomes an increasingly difficult behavior to change. The Province does understand this approach to planning and, in fact, requires municipalities to provide a certain level of service to a growing community well in advance of reaching full build-out. We, at the local level of government, certainly understand that waiting until a community is built and populated before providing public services is not sound, proactive, community planning.

I was pleased to learn our staff continued to enthusiastically advocate for GO Rail service in Caledon during the Task Force Meeting with the provincial Environmental Commissioner and they brought this inconsistency in planning for and providing GO services to his attention. I am confident this message resonated with the ECO. I hope it is reflected in what the Province ultimately decides it should be doing to help municipalities meet their climate change and energy conservation goals and objectives.

Caledon remains fully committed to being a green, ecologically sustainable and environmentally responsible community and I can assure you, we are exploring every opportunity with all of our partners to keep that promise.

-30-