

Caledon getting \$84,000 to revitalize Main Streets

By Bill Rea

Ontario is helping rural communities by supporting the revitalization of downtown and main streets across the province, and the Town of Caledon is among the beneficiaries.

Mayor Allan Thompson announced that he learned at the recent Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) conference that the Town's share of the provincial allocation will come to \$84,657. He got the word from Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Minister Jeff Leal.

"Main streets are at the core of small, rural communities and are home to thousands of small businesses across the province," Leal said. "That's why our government is committed to ensuring they continue to remain vibrant hubs where residents meet, tourists visit and small businesses grow and prosper."

Thompson said there's been no decision yet on how the money is going to be used, but a motion went to the general committee of Town Council last week, calling on staff to find the best use of the funding, and that a report be brought back to Council.

"It will allow council to have a good discussion," he commented.

He observed there have been projects to revitalize the main street of Bolton, but there's more to be done.

"We've got a lot of other communities," he said. "This might be able to help."

"We've been asking for this for quite a few years," Thompson observed, adding the announcement came out of the blue. "It's welcome news. It's good news."

He wasn't sure what prompted the sudden movement from the government, but suspected it had something to do with the file being passed to the Agriculture ministry, as opposed to Municipal Affairs, where he didn't think it would have been a major issue.

The Province is investing up to \$26 million in the Main Street Revitalization Initiative, which will be administered by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and its rural arm, ROMA.

This initiative is part of a \$40 million investment over three years in the Main Street Enhancement Fund, which will help strengthen small businesses in downtown and main street areas and enhance the digital presence and capabilities of small businesses through increased access to digital tools like e-commerce.