

Caledon pledges to have 13,000 new residential units by 2031]

By Zachary Roman

Peel and its three municipalities want to see more support from the province to meet required housing targets.

On March 21, Caledon Council gathered for a special meeting to discuss joint asks to the province created by staff from the Town of Caledon, City of Brampton, City of Mississauga, and Region of Peel.

By March 22, each of these municipalities was required to sign a housing pledge to Premier Doug Ford's government. The pledges outline how the municipalities will meet provincially-mandated housing growth targets brought in by Bill 23, the More Homes Built Faster Act. In Caledon's case, the Town is expected to have 13,000 new residential units by 2031.

Caledon Council originally approved a housing pledge at its February 21 Planning

and Development Committee Meeting. At its February 28 Council meeting, Council voted to defer approval of the housing pledge to allow the Region of Peel time to put forward requests to the province, and give Town staff more time to work on the pledge.

The new requests and updated Caledon Housing Pledge were presented to Caledon Council at the March 21 Special Council meeting.

The first joint ask from Peel municipalities to the province is that ?the development industry be required to sign pledges to demonstrate their commitment to building the units required to meet the Bill 23 housing targets.?

Staff from Peel municipalities note that while local and regional municipalities must plan for growth, provide soft and hard infrastructure, and approve applications, they, of course, do not build homes. Therefore, they think it pertinent that housing developers be required to commit to housing targets as well.

The second joint ask from Peel municipalities to the province is that ?the province provide municipalities with the authority to impose a sunset clause for site-specific approvals should a building permit not be issued within a specified time period.?

According to staff from Peel's three municipalities, there are thousands of units in Peel that have planning and development approvals in place but no building permits requested. Staff say these units are critical to meeting housing targets and that implementing a sunset clause would force development on already-approved sites.

A third ask from Peel and its municipalities is that ?the province provide local and regional municipalities with any funding shortfalls as a result of Bill 23, related to providing all elements of complete communities for the residents that will be living in the 1.5 million homes to be built (in Peel) by 2031.?

Region of Peel staff say that for local municipalities to meet Bill 23 targets, growth must be accelerated to 2.5 times what's currently planned for in the approved Region of Peel 2031 Official Plan. As such, there will be a corresponding need in Peel for accelerated infrastructure and services.

Staff are worried that Bill 23's changes to development charges, parkland dedication and community benefits charges will result in funding shortfalls. Peel municipalities are asking to be made whole so they can provide complete communities to those who will be living in the new residential units coming to the Region.

The fourth ask from Peel and its municipalities relates to the third ask, as they're requesting financial strategies and tools to support growth. This includes reimbursing any reductions in development charge revenue on an annual basis.

Municipal staff estimate \$20 billion in capital infrastructure will be needed to meet the province's housing targets prior to development (and thus prior to any development charge revenue). This vast sum of money could not be obtained by any means other than debt or tax and utility rate increases, which are not feasible according to staff.

Therefore, a combination of new provincial funding programs and innovative provincial financing solutions are required, reads the joint ask document prepared by municipal staff. All levels of government and the development community are encouraged to work together to design and implement these funding programs while ensuring outcome-based commitment and accountability of all participants.

The fourth ask also includes a request to fund increased service demand (e.g. police, fire, waste management) caused by the coming growth, and a request to streamline provincial processes related to infrastructure planning and approvals (e.g. environmental assessments, excess soil management).

A report prepared by Town of Caledon staff for the March 21 meeting recommended Caledon Council endorse the joint asks, as well as the updated housing pledge Town staff created with the joint asks in mind. Caledon's Chief Planner, Antoinetta Minichillo, provided Council with an update on the asks and pledge before its discussion and vote on the recommendations.

Ward 5 Councillor Tony Rosa thanked Town staff for its continued advocacy for required infrastructure and said the only way the pledge can be met is if developers work with the Town.

He said he's happy to support the pledge and was impressed with the work Town staff completed relating to it.

Regional Councillor, Wards 4, 5 and 6, Mario Russo said Caledon is asking for a lot and that it should be asking for a lot. He said respectfully, he doesn't think the province will adhere to all of Caledon or Peel's requests, but that they need to be made nonetheless.

Ward 1 Councillor Lynn Kiernan said she was concerned as to what would happen if Caledon approved its pledge but then did not get the required assistance it's asking for.

Minichillo said she understands this concern and that staff have been working on some backup plans. Minichillo said it was important for Caledon to be direct with the province about what it needs to build communities it can be proud of. Kiernan said she would be supporting the pledge with a preparing for the worst, hoping for the best mindset. She said Caledon needs to continue to be at the table with the province no matter what happens.

Ward 3 Councillor Doug Maskell shared Kiernan's concern, noting Caledon is being made to make a pledge without any reciprocal commitment of when the province will get back to it about the support needed to make the pledge happen. Minichillo said the Town is expecting to hear something from the province in June.

Council unanimously supported the Caledon housing pledge and corresponding joint asks to the province made with the Region of Peel, City of Brampton, and City of Mississauga.

Caledon's Housing Pledge consists of four components: units approved that have not yet applied for building permits (800 units); active applications under review (6,700 units); additional residential units (1,900 units); and units in the Bolton 2031 approved urban area and major transit station area (3,600 units).

Town staff say that with comprehensive planning and delivery of all required growth infrastructure from the Province and the Region, including emergency and community services, the Town can achieve and even exceed the total target of 13,000 new units by 2031.

However, staff say support will be critical as Caledon is disproportionately impacted by Bill 23 due to some of its required growth being on undeveloped land. Some Caledon-specific asks in the Caledon housing pledge include asking for a stop to Ministerial

Zoning Orders (MZOs) and a restriction on appeals for planning applications that are premature and not supported by the Town of Caledon.

Prior to the province's growth mandate, Caledon was already planning to have 12,000 new residential units by 2031, so staff are viewing the mandate as a natural enhancement to existing plans, should proper support be provided.

The Town fully intends on creating complete communities and remains committed to embracing change and innovation as it grows without compromising the values and integrity of its existing and future communities, reads the report prepared for the Special Council meeting. The Town of Caledon's housing pledge and all related documents can be viewed on the Town's website at www.caledon.ca/en/government/agendas-and-minutes.aspx. The documents are located in the agenda for the March 21 special Council meeting for those interested in further reading.