

Caledon poised to adopt Green Development Standards

Delegates supported adopting standards at recent planning meeting

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Caledon is taking steps to ensure future development in the municipality is sustainable.

At Caledon Council's May 14 Planning and Development Committee meeting, Councillors unanimously supported adopting Green Development Standards (GDS) created by Town of Caledon staff.

With Council's approval at the planning meeting, the GDS will be coming to a future Council meeting where they'll be recommended for final approval. Once approved, the standards will come into effect on July 1.

A staff report created by Alexandra Service, a Climate Change Specialist in Caledon's energy and environment division, notes implementing GDS is a key action in Caledon's climate change action plan.

The new GDS will apply to all new residential, commercial, and industrial developments in Caledon.

"Caledon's GDS involve a streamlined, single set of mandatory standards, with flexibility in how targets can be achieved," reads Service's report. "They will be rolled out within a one-year pilot phase to assess implementation and make adjustments if needed."

The GDS have 20 metrics across three theme areas: community design and mobility, green infrastructure, and buildings and energy.

GDS will be implemented through the planning approvals process as a required part of any complete development application.

"Applicants will submit a GDS checklist along with supporting documentation demonstrating how each metric has been achieved," said Service in the report.

Caledon's GDS implement requirements to create complete, connected communities that enable active and sustainable modes of transportation; improve stormwater management, reduce urban heat islands, and enhance habitat through urban green space; and support low carbon, energy efficient and resilient buildings and renewable energy systems.

At the May 14 meeting, there was a large show of support for implementing the GDS. Many delegates made presentations to Council where they detailed reasons Caledon should adopt GDS.

The first delegate was Evan Wiseman. He's the Senior Manager of Climate Policy for The Atmospheric Fund (TAF), which is a non-profit climate agency that invests in low-carbon solutions for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area and helps scale them up for broad implementation.

"I can safely say that Caledon staff set a new gold standard when dealing with stakeholders for other municipalities to follow," said Wiseman, after noting TAF supported Caledon's work on the GDS. "This update will ensure future buildings in the town are designed with sustainable best practices in mind."

Wiseman said it's encouraging to see robust requirements for embodied carbon, energy efficiency, solar-ready rooftops, and climate resilience in Caledon's GDS. He said in the future, Caledon's GDS could be updated to require new multi-unit residential buildings to be 100 per cent Electric Vehicle (EV) ready rather than 50. Wiseman also said the GDS could be updated in the future to require

new low-rise residential buildings to use non-fossil heating systems.

"We applaud Town of Caledon staff and Council for their hard work and leadership in advancing green development standards, and we look forward to collaborating with you and staff in the coming years on this file," said Wiseman.

Lucrezia Chiappetta and John MacRae, co-chairs of local non-profit ecoCaledon, were next to delegate. During the entire GDS process, ecoCaledon have been strong advocates for implementation of the standards.

"Embracing these standards will ensure that Caledon grows in a sustainable way, preserving itself to be an enviable place to live, play and work into the future," said MacRae. "They ensure that new construction is environmentally friendly, socially friendly, and economically responsible."

Chiappetta said while international agreements and national policies are essential, tangible change can be achieved at the local level too.

"[Implementing] standards for new buildings is one of the most powerful climate actions we can take to curb increasing emissions," said Chiappetta. "We at ecoCaledon strongly support our municipality adopting strong green development standards with mandatory energy performance targets as a key pathway to a healthy, net zero future."

Malkeet Sandhu from the David Suzuki Foundation was the next to delegate.

"Caledon is at a really critical point right now; the decisions that Council makes today are going to lay the foundation for the town's future," said Sandhu. "You might have noticed some emails in your inboxes the past month? over 200 Caledon residents have been emailing Council, saying this exact thing as well; that they want green development standards in place."

Kaneera Uthayakumaran, Ottavia Paluch, Nivedya Sudhir, and Kenisha Ahuja were the next to delegate. They represented New Majority, a non-partisan, non-profit organization focused on getting young people involved in the democratic process.

"You might not have been expecting this many teenagers and 20-somethings to be rallying around green development standards, but we're here because this matters, because this is one of the most impactful climate policies a city can pass," they said. "We don't want to see cities fall behind on climate action in the GTA? a vote for GDS is a vote for young people, for our futures, and for the future of our planet."

Dr. Mili Roy, a member of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, said implementing GDS is critical for public health.

"Built infrastructure already contributes about 30 per cent of Caledon's entire greenhouse gas emissions, primarily due to fossil gas use in buildings and this will rise steeply, as you all know, as the population is projected to nearly triple by 2050," said Roy. "Mandatory GDS are essential to meeting our climate targets, culminating in all new buildings being net zero by 2030."