

## Candidates for mayor discuss issues in Alton and Inglewood

By Bill Rea

The candidates seeking to be the next mayor of Caledon have had various chances in the last weeks to face the voters and each other in all-candidates' meetings.

They went at it Sept. 29 night at a session hosted by the Alton Village Association. The following night, they were the guests of the Village of Inglewood Association.

Four of the five candidates took part in these meetings. Candidate George Niras was not at them.

A lot of the points that had been previously made came up yet again.

'It's time to put Caledon back on track,' former councillor Ian Sinclair told the audience in Inglewood.

He added when he left council, there was respect for residents' money, as he stressed the need to control costs. Sinclair also repeated his calls for a long-term vision and co-ordinated plan.

He also brought up traffic issues on Highway 10, observing there have been many serious crashes with no explanation.

As well, Sinclair brought up the issue of high taxes, commenting that there are Caledon seniors who can't afford to retire.

He wondered how members of the current council can say they have to fix problems they helped create.

Councillor Allan Thompson commented on the need for a community engaged vision for the White Belt along the southern portion of town.

He also spoke about the need to improve customer service at the town, as well as finding money for infrastructure like roads and bridges.

Gary Cascone commented on understanding the uniqueness of Caledon, observing that urban sprawl is real and getting worse.

He also stressed the need for solid business principles for the future of the town.

Former councillor Nancy Stewart stressed the need to make sure Caledon is not swallowed by urban sprawl.

Addressing the situation at Town Hall, Stewart called for the creation of a culture of efficiency in public service.

She also repeated her call to have the public involved earlier in processes.

Dealing with the issue of red tape and obstacles that face people at Town Hall, Cascone said that's not really a tough issue. He said he'd bring in fast tracking for minor applications that should be dealt with in a day.

Sinclair called for changes in both the planning and building departments at the Town. He said there's a feeling that the practices at the Town are driving business from Caledon.

Thompson pointed out the Town of Halton Hills helps people navigate through the application process, and he'd like to see something like that in Caledon.

'We're not reinventing the wheel,' he said. 'We're just doing our service better.'

'My question to you, Allan, is why haven't you done it??' Stewart replied.

'I have,' Thompson replied back.

Stewart said she's been hearing a lot of stories of frustration on how the Town is not open for business.

'It is not something I could sit back and watch any more,' she said.

One woman in Inglewood observed there had been a lot of talk about improving quality of life, asking the candidates to define 'quality of life.'

'Caring community,' was Stewart's reply.

'Love,' Thompson said.

'Belonging,' Sinclair said.

'Dignity,' was the reply from Cascone.

The finances of the Town were on the minds of some of the people in Inglewood, with observations that the Town wins awards for budgeting, but there are problems with the process.

Stewart said she would want to make sure tax increases fall between zero and the cost of living increase, and that she would want the public to have input earlier in the process.

Thompson said the public is brought in early, adding that's been the case since 2011.

Sinclair recalled when he was on council there was always debate and discussion on the budget, but he charged there are documents that aren't available to the public.

He also pointed out the Caledon Agricultural Society has to fight for funding from the Town for the three events it puts on, and the organizers of Inglewood Day and Cheltenham Day have trouble too, but the Town puts \$42,000 toward Caledon Day. He called that

?unacceptable.?

Cascone said he would want council meetings televised.

The future of the arena in Inglewood was raised.

?What is it you'd like to do with the arena??Stewart asked, adding it needs to be discussed with the community.

Thompson said there are a lot of people who have been looking for ice, although that matter is being resolved.

Sinclair said he hears complaints over the lack of access to free skating.

Cascone said the facility should be made available at all hours.

The issue of how to deal with an aging population came up in Inglewood.

Stewart said that issue's close to her because she cares for aging parents, and has also been very active in Caledon Meals on Wheels.

She agreed there is a lack of facilities in that regard, as she pointed to the need for assisted living and seniors' accommodations.

Thompson observed there is seniors' housing going into SouthFields Village and there's also a project in the works for Mayfield West.

Sinclair said he had been talking to some seniors about the idea of renovating large houses and creating separate units in them.

?I think we have to look at that group home idea,? he said.

Sinclair also said recreational facilities have to be designed with seniors in mind.

Cascone commented on the need to address basic day-to-day needs, such as barrier-free access to facilities.

?It's a very impotent thing,? he said.

Dealing with red tape came up.

?That's something I've been battling with for quite some time,? Thompson said.

He agreed there are bylaws and zoning rules that are a little out of date.

?We're working at it all the time and we are getting much better,? he added.

Stewart said red tape was one of the reasons why she decided to run. She said people in the business community had been telling her ?horror stories? of what it's like trying to work with Town Hall.

Sinclair said he's heard staff moral is low at Town Hall, with people afraid to make decisions.

Cascone said the process of getting a site plan approved is a nightmare. He said it's necessary to look through the Town's bylaws and get rid of the redundant ones.