

Concerns about Caledon's proposed new aggregate policies raised at public meeting

Residents share desire for clear, prescriptive, and science-based policies

By Zachary Roman

Caledon will soon have new aggregate extraction policies, and some residents have raised concerns about whether they'll be good enough.

On September 17, the Town of Caledon held a public meeting about proposed updates to its aggregate policies. No Council decisions or recommendations are made at public meetings; Caledon Council will vote on the policies at a later date.

At the meeting, planning professional Joe Nethery gave a presentation on the work Caledon's been doing to update its aggregate policies and the policies themselves.

He said meetings have been taking place with Caledon's Aggregate Resources Community Working Group; 13 main meetings and 10 subgroup meetings. The Town has also liaised with the Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association (OSSGA) and Credit Valley Conservation (CVC), and had conversations with Ontario's Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Nethery said a number of topics have been of concern to residents, including but not limited to: water protection, impact on wildlife, traffic, setbacks, flyrock, air quality, and setbacks.

He said aggregate industry representatives have said commenting periods have been too brief and that some proposed policies go beyond what is mandated.

Nethery's presentation, which went into detail on the policy-making process and the Town's powers and limitations, is now available on the Town of Caledon's website. It can be found in the Council section of the site in the post agenda of the September 17 public meeting.

When Nethery's presentation was complete, people attending the meeting had a chance to delegate.

Anthony Fairclough, a Board member of the Forks of the Credit Presentation Group (FCPG), advocated for clear, prescriptive, and science-based policies that will protect Caledon residents and the environment.

He said Caledon's draft policies are not strong enough in the areas of air quality and water resources.

"As the climate crisis deepens, it is imperative that protective and proactive science-based policies are in place to prevent further environmental degradation," said Fairclough. "You may hear from the aggregate industry tonight that such a policy direction that we are suggesting may be too restrictive or prohibitively expensive. I would respond with, well, that's the cost of doing business."

Debra Wilson, who is also a member of the FCPG and delegated at the meeting as well.

"Our speed limit signs say 80 kilometers per hour. They do not say, don't drive too fast. Our aggregate policies need to be the same? I didn't see all the clear, prescriptive, science-based policies that are needed to protect the health and well-being of Caledon residents and visitors," she said.

Mike McSweeney of the OSSGA delegated next and said it's not clear why Caledon would implement policies that could push costs up on basic building materials when it has big plans for growth in the coming years. He said the OSSGA is happy to work with

residents and community groups to address their concerns and that every decision the aggregate industry makes is backed by science and data.

McSweeney said some of Caledon's proposed policy changes overstep municipal authority.

"The proposed amendments are being introduced on top of an already robust aggregate regulatory framework," he said. "Let's work together, the municipality, the Province, our industry and the residents to find solutions that will benefit everyone. By collaborating, we can ensure aggregates are developed sustainably and responsibly and safeguarding Ontario's future while protecting the local environment."

Albert Carwana, president of the local Chapter of Trout Unlimited Canada, advocated for protection of groundwater entering the Credit River. He said it's critical for the survival of the brook trout that call the river home.

Tony Sevelka delegated about the dangers of blasting quarries generating flyrock and how there's not nearly enough regulatory framework surrounding it.

"Every blast generates flyrock" the only thing that's in doubt is how far it will go and whether it will damage equipment, whether it will damage vehicles, and whether it will harm, permanently injure, or kill human or non-human life," he said.

David Sylvester, president of the FCPG, said a number of Caledon's draft policies include vague and ambiguous terminology. He said the words "encouraged" and "may" are seen too often in the policies.

Caledon began the process of updating its aggregate policies in 2022 after the FCPG advocated that Caledon implement an Interim Control Bylaw (ICBL) to prevent any new pits and quarries.

The FCPG had commissioned a report that found Caledon had the weakest aggregate policies out of the top ten aggregate producing municipalities in Ontario.

Caledon implemented its ICBL against new pits and quarries on October 18, 2022 and renewed it for one year "the maximum allowed" in 2023. The ICBL will expire on October 18 of this year.

If Caledon passes any new aggregate policies, they must be sent to the Province's Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (with comment from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry).

The Ministry can then approve, modify, or deny the policy updates.