

Council debates, and supports look at attendance registry

By **Matthew Strader**

In a Governance Committee meeting, it was determined that Caledon Council should support the adoption of an attendance registry.

However, Councillor Christina Early decided to hold the minutes from the committee meeting prior to their approval and initiated a debate on whether Caledon Council should have an attendance registry at all.

Because they already do, she argued.

?To have to write something to the clerk two days after (an absence or virtual attendance), I didn't attend and attended virtually because of x, just seems like we're in grade school,? Early said.

The Councillor said she struggled with the idea once she saw it during the Committee meeting, as she argued that it isn't an issue at Caledon Council. She believed any Caledon Councillor had maybe one or two absences total.

She expressed frustration with doing work on something that she didn't feel was needed, as well as the idea of attendance at Council being a potential judge of a Councillors' dedication.

?This is the small part of the job,? she said about Council meetings, explaining that the majority of her Council work was with community members and at community meetings, and not at the Council table.

Councillor Lynn Kiernan said she was a little taken aback too when she saw the decision at committee. She said Councillor Early was right, that 90 per cent of the job was not sitting at the table, it's in the community.

?Nobody has ever had a problem with my attendance, and nobody in Ward One is shy. They would tell me.?

Kiernan also questioned whether the move would be infringing on privacy rights or possibly compromising the safety of the Councillors. If the reasons for absences are made public, she explained, then members of the public could learn when Councillors are away, and that their homes are empty.

?If I was to go on vacation and then my vehicle was burgled, I would bring that back here.?

Councillor Nick de Boer called it an unnecessary overreach.

He asked if Councillors can just categorically say their absence is personal. The Town Clerk explained that Councillors are offered three reasons for absences in health and safety, business and personal, and further explanation is not needed.

Regional Councillor Mario Russo said attendance was not really an issue at the Caledon Council table, but it was at the Regional one, and he believed Caledon shouldn't wait for the issue to arise.

?If you leave the chamber right now, it's recorded in the minutes,? he said. ?If you have a cough and don't want to share it with the rest of Council, then that's why. If someone from the community calls me and asks me why I attended virtually, I would tell them the same, so I don't see an issue with this. I think it's good policy.?

Council voted in support of the adoption of the minutes, and the committee recommendation.