

Council should listen to residents, not staff

In an astonishing display of disregard for the serious concerns of their constituents, Caledon council Dec. 9 voted by 7-1 to approve zoning for a Class 3 Industrial operation ? processing demolition debris ? within a 293-acre gravel pit in north-west Caledon (the Olympia pit).

The council chambers were packed to overflowing and the overflow area in the cafeteria was full. Closed circuit TV was set up there so everyone could watch the highly professional delegations and the antics of their councillors. The meeting was conducted in a manner reminiscent of a gong-show as more than a dozen delegations were strictly limited to a 10-minute time limit, with the exception that the Olympia delegation was permitted to go on for well in excess of 20 minutes. Such was the partiality on display by the majority of council members.

The numerous delegations were very knowledgeable, with detailed analysis of a seriously flawed staff report that misinterpreted provincial laws and local regulations. The councillors and mayor were presented with community concerns and evidence that contradicted the positions of Town staff. Among many eloquently expressed concerns, for example, is that according to Ontario's Ministry of the Environment (MOE), a Class 3 industrial operation, such as the crushing and grinding of demolition debris, is supposed to be separated from ?sensitive land uses,? such as residences, by a minimum of 1,000 metres (one kilometre). By locating such an operation within a pit or quarry, the operators can evade MOE rules and scrutiny. In the process, they can expose the local residents and their aquifer (their wells), and their air, to all manner of toxic ingredients that will be present in demolition waste. As unacceptable as this is, it appears there is nothing Caledon residents can do other than appeal their council's decision to the Ontario Municipal Board. Ironically one of the reasons given by Councillor Richard Paterak for approving the rezoning was to avoid the threat, and expense, of being challenged at the OMB by Olympia. Now our councillors have put themselves in a position of having to oppose their own community and defend Olympia before the OMB over a seriously deficient and poorly justified staff recommendation.

At the end of the day we ask, ?We are paying them, but who are they actually working for??

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