

Council to revisit aggregate policies following Provincial changes

By Riley Murphy

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Two unanimous motions passed at Caledon Council's February 24 meeting mark the Town's latest attempt to respond to the Province's 60 modifications to Caledon's Official Plan Amendment No. 1 (OPA 1).

The first, brought forward by Councillor Doug Maskell, stated that the decision regarding OPA 1 dismissed years of collaboration and work by Council, community volunteers, staff and technical experts to modernize the Town's aggregate policies and protect the health, safety and quality of life of the community.

The OPA 1 was approved on January 7, with no right of appeal.

The Town's 2025-2026 Aggregate Work Program is ongoing, and included among

its aggregate policy implementation projects is a Town-wide OPA, which was intended to

build upon OPA 1 as originally adopted by Council, and Council can further amend the Future Caledon Official Plan if appropriate.

Maskell moved that staff be directed to review the Province's modifications to OPA 1 with relevant local interests and the public on priority matters for inclusion in a potential further official plan amendment related to mineral aggregate resources, and that Council authorize a scope change to the 2025-2026 Aggregate Work Program.

The report would come back by April 21, 2026.

It was said that the modifications to OPA 1 ?struck out certain wording and policies on the basis that they were not consistent or in conformity with Provincial policies and plans or did not comply with Provincial regulations and guidelines.?

Debra Wilson of the Forks of the Credit Conservation Group delegated on the motion that night, and shared that, in the Province's Planning Statement in 2024, it is said municipalities are the primary decision-makers for local communities.

?The Ministry owes it to you, our Council, to listen to the reasons for the policy decisions that you made for our community,? said Wilson.

She explains that within the provincial policy-led planning system, planning authorities and decision-makers may go beyond these minimum standards to address matters of importance to a specific community, unless doing so would conflict with any policy in the Provincial Planning Statement.

?The province itself has stated that you are the primary decision makers for your local community. Provincial ministries, therefore, really need to listen to municipalities and their residents, not just to the aggregate industry. Now is not the time to stop,? she said.

Resident Kate Hepworth pulled from Forks of the Credit Preservation Group in her own delegation, citing their often-used quote, ?Dripping water hollows out stone, not through force, but through persistence.?

?Maybe we can all please be that water that drips on the stone, and let's go back to the province and ask why,? she said.

Town Staff explained during the meeting that the Province ultimately has the final say; they can continually negotiate and push for

alternatives, but, in this case, they had little opportunity to do so.

Wilson pointed out a ?groundswell? building around this topic beyond Caledon, saying that Caledon Council is fighting the great fight, with other municipalities turning to Caledon for leadership.

?We have to just continue the fight. And yes, they may turn us down, but we have to just keep pounding at the door and hounding them always, and at some point, they will listen,? said Mayor Annette Groves.

At Caledon's January 27 Council Meeting, Council unanimously supported a motion brought forward by Councillors Lynn Kiernan and Christina Early to request support from the Top Aggregate Producing Municipalities of Ontario (TAPMO) to seek amendments to provincial aggregate-related planning policies, also in an effort to push back from the Province.

Maskell, speaking to his motion, said that when the province came back with the ?0 for 60? on their recommendations for OPA1, there was a collective sense of disappointment in the community and at Council.

?We went forward in good faith hoping that we might not get everything, but we'd get something. And in the end we got nothing,? said Maskell.

He added that if they're going to come back to the Province with a distilled version of their asks for what's most important to the community, now is the time to do so.

Councillor Mario Russo echoed that they were ?batting for the fences? with their original ask.

?The rationale now is to continue to fight the good fight and see where we can hopefully make a dent and make little baby steps forward, so that every single policy that, whatever number we put forward, we'll be continuously advocating for moving the needle forward a bit,? said Russo.

The motion was approved unanimously.

Next was Mayor Groves' motion to direct staff to create a Town-wide bylaw focused on health protection and air quality.

?We were struck down the first time when we brought the motion forward for air quality to be included in our OPA policies,? said Groves. ?However, if we don't succeed the first time, we try again.?

Groves added that Fine Particulate Matter particles in the air, also known as PM 2.5, are a ?huge problem.?

?Every time we [Region of Peel] dealt with PM 2.5, our medical officers of health would always reiterate the impacts that this will have and has on people's respiratory systems,? said Groves. ?We can only take so much, and when you have these 22 pits and quarries, and a proposed quarry of 600 to 700 acres, that's a lot of dust.?

Groves said it's important to ?take control of our own destiny? and to include air quality in the by-law to be able to have more say when it comes to dealing with air quality.

The motion was also approved unanimously.