

Councillor Innis covers many issues at church event

By Bill Rea

There's lots to deal with as a Regional councillor, as Jennifer Innis is learning.

The rookie Regional councillor for Caledon's Wards 3 and 4 recently offered some insights of the job when she addressed a community round table hosted by the House on the Rock Church in Caledon East.

In addition to being a councillor, Innis sits on other bodies, like Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), Government Relations Committee at the Region, the committee dealing with Canada Day celebrations at Albion Hills Conservation Area and EcoCaledon.

Innis told the audience there is a lot happening in town these days, with the municipality being at a turning point.

Roughly 80 per cent of the land in Caledon is protected by Provincial plans governing the Greenbelt, Oak Ridges Moraine and Niagara Escarpment. Part of the remaining 20 per cent includes the GTA West Corridor, which Innis said will drastically change the look and economy of the town.

Innis said it's important to get public input on how to protect the agricultural land.

Dealing with specific issues, Innis told one woman about the planned subdivision at in the north side of Walker Road at Mountainview Road. She said there was a well-attended public information meeting on the matter, but council has not voted on it yet. The areas of concern include the size of the park in the proposed development, the types and number houses planned, and the future of a large hill on the site. The hill is on private property, but it is used for tobogganing in the winter. She said people in the area don't want to lose the hill.

Traffic along Walker Road is another issue, she said, as well as parking within the development.

Innis said there are a number of issues involving Walker, and the Town is looking at more parking restrictions on the street.

There is no chance to widen the road, she said, because existing houses are too close to the street.

There has also been talk of installing signals at the intersection with Airport Road. The traffic numbers currently aren't high enough for that, although she said that could change if the subdivision goes in.

The proposal is currently before the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB), but no hearing date has been set.

A man from Terra Cotta commented there's a proliferation of subdivisions.

"I look upon (Caledon) as a jewel in the GTA," he said, adding he likes to think councillors will have conscience and put more emphasis into preservation than intensification.

He also mentioned population growth figures, which he said are excessive and mandated by the Province. He asked if the Province is being challenged on any of this.

Innis said the Province has asked the Regions to do Land Evaluation Area Review (LEAR) studies, that are looking into such factors as soil quality, etc. It's also looking at supports for the agricultural sector, such as feed mills, elevators to dry grain, processing facilities for animals, etc. Innis pointed out to be successful in agriculture, good soil is needed, as well as the supports. If farmers have to pay too much for food for their livestock, that could be detrimental to the operation.

She also observed the good agricultural land in the southern portion of LEAR has been reduced. Roads don't disconnect farmland, but the 400-series highway that is proposed to be part of the East West Corridor would impact on the agricultural community.

The study of the corridor is being carried out at the same time as LEAR. Innis said if LEAR is completed before a route is decided for the new highway, she will object to the recommendations. Decisions are going to have to be made on what to do with the land to the south of the highway.

Innis said decisions have been made on what to put the population growth up to 2031, but not to 2041.

She also said the Town has asked for delinking of the employment and residential lands around Bolton. She observed the type of industry Caledon is attracting is more along the lines of warehouse and logistics. That's the trend in industry these days, as stores are getting smaller due to the popularity of on-line shopping. Caledon is also seeing a drop in office space, with the trend for such operations to go back downtown.

Innis pointed out traffic passes through Caledon on the way to jobs in the south, but the Town still has to pay for the upkeep of its roads. The Town is trying to promote live-work communities.

As well, Innis observed that once the Greenbelt came in, development leapfrogged over that and went north, to places like Alliston and Shelburne. That means there's a lot of commuter traffic using Highway 10, Airport Road, Highway 50, etc., as well as Town roads. About 70 per cent of the traffic in Caledon is from out of town, but the Town is out of pocket to service it all.

Innis said she's asked Town staff to compile data to prove the leapfrogging has been going on, so the Town can tell the Province if it

wants the municipality to preserve the Greenbelt, then help pay for it.

She added it will be another matter as to whether the Province answers such an approach, but she said it's important to bring the issue forth.

She also pointed out that about 80 per cent of the assessment in Caledon is residential. 'That's not sustainable,' she said, adding it should be down to something like 70 per cent. That means there's a need to protect future employment lands, which points to the need to know exactly where the proposed highway is going to go.

Another complication she mentioned is that a lot of the farm land is being bought up by developers. That means it's hard for farmers to move in an invest, since it's difficult to buy land to farm.

One man suggested government buy up some of these lands and lease it to new farmers.

Innis didn't think the Province would put up that kind of money because it hasn't got it.

She also commented on the efforts to bring high-speed internet to town, observing it's an important thing, especially for students who do their homework and consult text books on-line. She said there are a number of service providers in town.

There is consideration being given to establishing satellite dishes on farm silos. There's also going in along Highway 50 between Bolton and Palgrave to provide service for the Pan Am Games.

One man observed that a lot of services depend on industry, and he said there's not enough industry in town to pay for Wi-Fi.

There were also concerns expressed for the small stores in town.

Innis said there are some proposals being discussed. In the Bolton core, there are efforts to encourage more walking and cycling. She added once the Bolton Arterial Road (BAR) is complete, trucks will be out of the core, and the hope is that will bring in more pedestrians.

One man raised the issue of fill perits, commenting he had heard the rules were going to be tightened, but he had also heard that 5,000 truckloads of fill was going to build a berm at Palgrave to quarentene horses during the Pan Am Games.

Innis commented on the need to ensure fill coming in improves agriculture, which is why the fill bylaw is being reviewed. they are also looking to require proof about where fill comes from.



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