

Councillor Mezzapelli asks for open minds regarding Canadian Tire

Much has been written about the proposed Canadian Tire (CT) distribution center in Bolton, and many opinions have been expressed at various public meetings.

I would like to provide some perspective, and I strongly encourage you to take the time to read this.

My philosophy is and always has been that I don't wish to form people's opinions on matters, but want to ensure as much factual, unbiased information is available for them to reach an informed position on their own. I would never attempt to impose my perspective on this issue onto you, nor should anyone else ? regardless of their personal feelings. With that in mind, I want to give a brief history of what got us to where we are, as well as the choices before us. All of the following is what I believe to be true and factual.

Back in 2006, the Province enacted legislation to guide and assist municipalities on planning matters. As a result, they were required to show how they would conform to these requirements. Specific to employment growth planning, the Town completed its South Albion-Bolton Settlement Boundary Expansion Study For Employment Lands in 2009, which selected 620 acres in Bolton as part of the larger Caledon-wide requirement of 1,110 acres to accommodate employment growth up to 2031. It's important to know that these lands are industrial in nature and not commercial or retail. The Bolton employment lands selected lie west of Coleraine Drive from Mayfield Road to Holland Drive running west halfway to Humber Station Road. They are immediately adjacent to existing employment lands on the east side of Coleraine. To my knowledge, the selection of these lands was neither contentious nor opposed, and indeed, of all the vocal opposition to the CT proposal, virtually none contest these lands becoming employment lands.

From all I have heard and read, the key concerns regarding the CT proposal are the number of trucks it will add to our community, congestion issues, impacts on air quality, and health and safety related to trucks. These are all issues that should be important to every one of us. It is important to note that all of these concerns are directly related to the number of trucks. As the number goes up, so too does congestion, poorer air quality and safety issues.

Will the CT proposal have an impact on the concerns raised above? Yes it will. So too will the alternative to CT and this comparison is what I would like to explore. Let's start with CT.

CT's proposal is one single operation sitting on 180 acres and will house a building of 1.5 million square feet, including 100,000 square feet of office space. The site is projected to introduce 350 truck movements per day (in and out) on average. I have visited the the Brampton facility CT is proposing to relocate to Bolton three times (one hour each time) to witness first-hand the truck movements. At 11:40 a.m. Jan. 17, I counted 12 trucks (in and out) in an hour, which would translate to 288 per day. I returned May 23 at 11 a.m. and counted 38 trucks in an hour, which would mean 912 trucks per day if multiplied by 24. I contacted CT to understand why this number was so high. Early May is a very busy period for the spring-summer season, with many bulky items such as barbecues, patio sets, lawn mowers, bikes, etc. I went back June 1 at 7 a.m. and the number was down to 14, or 336 per day. What would the alternative to the CT proposal on the same 180 acres look like? No one can say for sure, but I have looked extensively at existing employment lands on the east side of Coleraine as a comparison. I believe this is a reasonable expectation of what the alternative to CT would look like and illustrate what impacts we can expect it will have on our town.

There are 180 acres in the older employment land on the east side of Coleraine (in the Simpson Road area) that include approximately 80 smaller individual businesses, largely manufacturing, and 180 acres of newer employment land in the Pillsworth Road area include roughly 30 larger businesses, some of which include warehousing and distribution. Both areas would gross more than 1.5 million square feet.

If CT would introduce 350 trucks per day on average, how many trucks would 30 to 80 individual businesses on the same land generate? In the Simpson Road area, it's impossible to isolate 180 acres from the rest of the employment lands. That said, if the 80 businesses were to each require four truck movements per day that would amount to 320 in total. I would say this is likely a conservative number and on average each business would require more truck movements.

Regarding the 30 larger businesses, there is actually an opportunity to isolate employment lands to calculate truck movement impacts. Simpson Road south of McEwan is currently a dead-end industrial road and as such any trucks that enter or leave this intersection service only these employment lands. I sat at this intersection at 11 a.m. June 6, and 39 trucks came and went, which surpassed the busiest hour I had observed at CT.

I do realize that manufacturing may not operate 24/7 like CT, and that this would affect overall truck impacts. On the other hand, it's important to note that the truck count on Simpson Road only involved 13 businesses and roughly 60 acres.

In the end, my observations tell me that the alternative to CT will introduce more trucks on 180 acres of employment land than CT. If this is true, then all the negative issues related to trucks would be worse as well. I will leave it up to you to decide for yourself.

As always, I keep an open mind, I listen and I observe. I have asked countless questions of staff, consultants and the applicant. I have spoken and heard from many residents on both sides. This all put together will guide me as I vote on this matter when it comes before council.

Rob Mezzapelli,
Area Councillor, Ward 5,
Town of Caledon