

Debate on Canadian Tire motion was stopped before it started

By Bill Rea

Caledon councillors were ready last week to discuss the zoning on the massive Canadian Tire development in Bolton, but the debate was halted before it even started.

Councillor Jennifer Innis, who was chairing the meeting, ruled the Town did not have the authority to deal with the matter. She said local authority had been superceded by a Ministerial Zoning Order (MZO), which the Province issued for the development in July 2013.

"We couldn't debate it," she remarked later. "Couldn't discuss it."

Councillor Annette Groves had put forth a notice of motion calling for an Official Plan amendment and rezoning process for the site, in light of plans to produce and store hydrogen there.

Her motion, which was included in the agenda of last Tuesday's meeting of the General Committee of council, stated Canadian Tire has applied for a site plan amendment for the large distribution centre, which is currently being constructed at the corner of Coleraine Drive and Healey Road. The amendment will allow for the production and storage of hydrogen on site, to be used internally to power equipment.

Such site plan amendment applications do not require a public information meeting. Such meetings are required for rezonings or Official Plan amendments.

The motion also noted the MZO permits bulk storage of petroleum products, but does not specifically permit their production.

It also stated there have been concerns raised by the public over the safety of producing and storing such material.

Groves' motion called for the rezoning and Official Plan amendment, complete with the required public process. It also stated the amendments should have the effect of revoking the MZO. As well, the motion called for a prohibition on "the storage and production of hydrogen or other noxious gases as a means to ensure general public safety and compatibility to existing and sensitive residential land uses."

There was little debate when Innis announced the motion would not be discussed, although Councillor Barb Shaughnessy voiced some concerns.

"I really believe everybody has the right to have a discussion," she remarked, adding the Town could issue a letter asking the MZO be reviewed.

Innis countered the motion didn't ask for that.

Groves didn't comment on the matter while council was in session, but she later indicated she wasn't very pleased with the way things turned out.

"They wouldn't give me an opportunity to speak, . . . which I find is totally undemocratic," she said, adding to halt her motion on "some lame excuse" was wrong and not fair to the people who are interested in this.

"It begs the question, 'What are we trying to hide?'" she added.