

## Democracy Caledon against recent updates to Caledon's purchasing bylaw

Town's CAO can now source contracts up to \$500,000 without Council approval

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A local advocacy group is decrying recent updates to Caledon's purchasing bylaw that allow the Town's CAO to source contracts up to \$500,000 without Council approval.

Democracy Caledon issued a media release on February 21 to express "grave concern" with the policy change, which was made at council's February 4 general committee meeting and ratified on Tuesday.

Specifically, the change is for non-standard procurements for single and sole-source contracts up to \$500,000; the CAO can now approve these. Before the change, Town staff would not be able to approve any such contract above \$50,000 without bringing it to Council for its approval first.

Caledon's Chief Financial Officer Robert Cummings said the purchasing bylaw change brings Caledon in line with other municipalities of its size and allows purchasing processes to be sped up when necessary.

Debbe Crandall, President of Democracy Caledon, said the change is an "alarming surrender of Council's fiscal management responsibilities to staff."

Further, she said it's a dangerous concentration of power that undermines transparency and accountability for Caledon taxpayers.

Democracy Caledon is advocating for a \$100,000 limit for CAO-approved non-standard procurements.

"Council is abdicating and outsourcing its responsibility to oversee significant expenditures of taxpayer money," said Crandall.

At the Tuesday, February 25, Council meeting, more discussion on the policy change took place. Mayor Annette Groves, Ward 3 Councillor Doug Maskell, Ward 5 Councillor Tony Rosa, Ward 6 Councillor Cosimo Napoli, and Regional Councillor Mario Russo supported the change.

Ward 1 Councillor Lynn Kiernan, Ward 2 Councillor Dave Sheen, Ward 4 Councillor Nick de Boer, and Regional Councillor Christina Early were against it.

Groves said she takes fiscal responsibility seriously and that the change in the procurement process reflects the need to be able to adapt quickly. She also noted a biannual report on acquisition of goods and services over \$50,000 is presented to Council to ensure transparency and sound financial management.

In response, de Boer said the initial staff report on the change "which was presented on February 4" did not have enough information for him to be able to support it.

Sheen agreed with de Boer, and added that Council should not be delegating so much responsibility to Town staff.

"I think that's what the public elected us to do is to be careful with how money is spent," said Sheen. "I'm not saying that staff can't

spend money carefully, but good governance requires Council to exercise that kind of authority.?

Rosa said he does not want to see projects slowed down as a result of Caledon's purchasing bylaw.

?We need to get the work done. We need to trust the individuals that are veterans? who work in the best interest of our community?  
executing the budget that we have approved,? said Rosa.