

Editorial ? Hydrogen is part of the future

There were about 50 people on hand last Thursday for the community meeting hosted by Councillor Annette Groves. Not surprisingly, the latest issues involving the massive Canadian Tire development dominated much of the conversation. To refresh, Canadian Tire is seeking an amendment to the site plan for the development to allow for the production and storage of hydrogen, and the plan is to use it internally to run equipment.

There are many who are putting forth the notion that hydrogen is one of the fuels of the future. Indeed, just a couple of weeks ago, Mayor Allan Thompson and Councillor Jennifer Innis got to try out a car that runs on hydrogen. It gives off no emissions, apart from water, which is created when it's mixed with oxygen after it has been used to power an electrical current that runs the motor. We can understand that some people might hear mention of the word hydrogen and have concerns, considering some of the ways it has been used in the past. But we are well into the 21st century now, and times, knowledge and technology have changed. We can understand as well that some people might be angry about the prospects of hydrogen at the Canadian Tire facility, especially since that wasn't discussed at any length during the process that resulted in the local development proceeding. Several of them made their views known last week.

But it is important to listen to the other side too. There were several at the meeting who were not willing to do that. Councillor Rob Mezzapelli tried, outlining some of the research he's done. And anyone who even occasionally attends a Town council meeting knows Mezzapelli is a guy who does his homework. Yet there were several attempts to shout him down. There are calls that there should be a public process for this change to the site plan.

Well, the rules are clear that no such process is required, and those rules are in place for a reason. It would be nice to set certain concerns to rest, but we have to wonder how many of the people calling for this process are really just hoping it can be a way to delay the whole development; a development which, incidentally, is nearing completion.

There was a lot of opposition to the Canadian Tire development when it was approved, but did those foes represent a majority of the community?

There is some doubt. Mezzapelli himself expressed his belief that most residents of the Bolton area were not opposed to the development, once they were provided with more information. He was recounting what he faced going door-to-door during the last election. And the record shows he won handily, falling just short of half the votes in a five-way race.

As well, it is not the Town that will ultimately decide on the hydrogen facility. The regulatory body is the Technical Standards and Safety Authority (TSSA). It is experts from that agency who will make the decision, and monitor the operation.

The Canadian Tire development is well on its way to completion. We believe it will be a benefit to the community in the long-run. And we also think the hydrogen component is not something to be feared, but maybe to be embraced as being symbolic of the 21st century.