

Former councillor Sinclair running to be next mayor of Caledon

Former Peel Regional councillor and long-time community activist Ian Sinclair filed nomination papers Monday to run for mayor of Caledon in this fall's municipal election.

Sinclair served for nine years (1994 to 2003) as both an area and Regional councillor for Ward 1. He chaired many major policy committees, including the Caledon Community Resource Study supporting adoption of Caledon's OPA 161 Mineral Aggregate Policies.

"I have always taken on complex official plan policy challenges, worked closely with professional staff and affected residents to see projects through to approval," Sinclair said.

Sinclair was a director and president of the former Caledon Ratepayers Association from 1979 to 1986, when the association achieved the first Caledon Official Plan policies for mineral aggregates that resulted in improved notification to residents.

"The province came in and ordered the Town to identify vast areas of Caledon exclusively for aggregate strip mining without notifying existing landowners," he observed. "The members of the Caledon Ratepayers Association fought the Province off. You don't always have to accept whatever the provincial government of the day dictates."

Addressing current issues, Sinclair said he's become concerned with the Town's budget process and the substantial annual tax increases that have resulted in a cumulative doubling of Town taxes over the last 10 years.

"The doubling of property tax rates in Caledon is unacceptable," he said. "This is creating an unfair burden for our residents currently dealing with private sector wage freezes and for our seniors on fixed incomes."

Sinclair also pointed out what he called the illogical spending priorities demonstrated by the current Town council.

"We have underfunded road and bridge infrastructure needs, with some road closures lasting years, but the Town has spent many millions on a major equestrian show venue," he commented. "Spending priorities in Caledon do not reflect our core mandates." He also charged the Town budget process is uncoordinated, with various important statements on debt, capital reserves, operations, etc. all produced at different times.

"A Caledon taxpayer should be able to read town budget and financial statements on one or two pages," he said.

A major concern he cited is the lack of political representation on major proposals affecting health, safety, property values and surrounding communities. He charged residents impacted by major developments don't learn until years after that the Town has been meeting with industry and its consultants, only to find that council and staff have already made a decision prior to seeking any public input.

"Public meetings have turned into just an exercise council feels obligated to endure," Sinclair remarked. "Their decisions have already been made to approve the project. They do not appear interested in listening to the legitimate concerns of the residents." Gravel strip mines, major distribution warehouses, heavy goods haul routes, and significant growth planning policies rise in the public space as "done deals," he added.

"Residents must be carefully listened to as they are the most affected by major land use changes and know most about their surroundings. Attitudes need upgrading," he commented.

As an example, he cited a public information meeting in Caledon East for the Canadian Tire Distribution complex where a moderator was hired by the Town. He said the moderator pointed to an OPP officer standing at the back of the room and repeated three times, if anyone acted in a way he did not agree with, they would be removed.

"Caledon residents are now routinely treated curtly and often with derision when speaking up at public meetings," Sinclair said.

"No one has to agree entirely with others, but respect must be the norm," he added. "Police threats are simply outrageous."

Sinclair stated he has the education, professional background and broad, hands-on experience, having served on Town and Regional councils, as well as a board member of the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and Commissioner of the Niagara Escarpment Commission to be an effective chair of council. He is known for his skill in seeking consensus among councillors and senior staff. His 35 years of activism in the Caledon community on environmental issues demonstrates his commitment to effectively serve the people of Caledon as mayor.

Sinclair said he views his chances of election as "pretty good."

He observed that he is well-known in the community.

"I have some support in each ward," he added. "I know the issues right across town."