

## It's never been easier to Have Your Say?

by SHERALYN ROMAN

With so much chatter about elections, local municipal politics and concern in the community around illegal land use and traffic concerns, it seems appropriate today to also share a bit of information on how easy it is for you to have your say about the matters that matter most to you.

We often spend time in this space talking about issues of importance to all residents, and we also know that sometimes these columns go on to generate further conversation throughout the community. But then what? What comes after you share information or talk to your neighbours? Well, there is a way for you to have your say in a more constructive way than just complaining over the fence or on social media. It's never been easier.

Here's a little cheat sheet on the how.

First though, a caution that this column isn't meant to be a direct hands-on tutorial on exactly how to navigate the town website and the various processes by which you can ensure your voice is heard. Rather, it's hoped a few myths might be dispelled concerning how difficult it might be to do so. The biggest hint? It's NOT difficult! Furthermore, "not having time" isn't really an excuse, even if you are running the kids to school, or various activities AND working a full-time job. That's because there are actually multiple ways to have your say, starting with the easiest of all, called "Have Your Say!" an online tool available through the Town of Caledon's website found at [www.caledon.ca](http://www.caledon.ca)

Once on the Town's website, you can click on the link "public engagement" which will take you directly to the "Have Your Say" portal. Once there, you can register with just a few clicks of a button, and then select from any of the "current opportunities" listed in order to provide your input on what's happening around town. You can do all of this from the comfort of your couch, and at any time day or night, so there's really no excuse to not register your compliments or criticisms about upcoming matters related to how our town is managed; the facilities it provides, taxation, development, or any number of similar issues.

It's just as fast and simple as posting a comment on social media, but in this case actually provides way more potential for our collective voices to be heard (by the employees of the town, our Mayor and our Councillors) and then acted upon.

Clicking on the "Have Your Say" portal, as it appeared at time of writing this column, led to surveys on the proposed new method of electing regional councillors at large, on short-term rental licensing (e.g.; Airbnbs,) both issues we addressed last week in this space, and also, there's even a "Tree Preservation Bylaw" survey you may wish to participate in. In the time it's taken you to read this column about how to have your say, you could just as easily have had your say!

Other options for having your voice heard include delegating to council, but that too is not nearly so daunting as you might think. There are several ways to do so and two of them don't even require your physical presence in Council Chambers. The town recognizes that we all lead busy lives and has made it easier for residents to participate in democracy. These tools are readily available and I believe we should all make use of them as they represent an important opportunity to ensure Council and our Mayor hear, first-hand, about resident concerns.

According to the Town of Caledon's website you can register to delegate to Council directly either "in-person or virtually and speak to an item listed on an Agenda prior to the start of a meeting." It's as easy as visiting the town's website and notifying the municipal clerk's office by way of a simple click on a button that will take you to a registration page. Your name, address and contact information are recorded and the system will prompt you for a short description of the topic on which you wish to speak. If you have materials you wish to have included in the public record you can upload them and anything submitted prior to the meeting will be published to the agenda forming part of the public record.

The bottom line is simply this: if you have something to say, you can certainly attend a meeting in person and take your turn at the microphone, but if that's not feasible, you don't even have to leave your home. After still following the previously described registration process, you can take your turn virtually, attending the meeting from the comfort of your couch. Perhaps easiest of all, you can simply choose to submit your comments about a particular agenda item in writing in order to have them included as part of the written record.

There's a lot going on in Caledon at the moment, from illegal truck facilities and general traffic mayhem, to massive planned population growth and increased housing development. These are issues that impact us all and now that you know how easy it is, there's really no reason not to get involved and have your say.