

## Local politics as morality play

Since I moved here a few years ago, our Town council in Caledon has come in for a lot of flack, for trying to limit unbridled residential development and for its choice of an industrial partner in Canadian Tire.

Epithets like 'ignorant?', 'arrogant?', 'misguided?' and 'unqualified?' have recently appeared in print. The vitriol is increasingly reminding me of our neighbour Vaughan, where public meetings on development issues can get out of hand. It seems to reflect standards of public behaviour that differ from our tradition.

We now know that our Caledon mayor has been the victim of a scam by a recently-convicted tax auditor who falsified documents to frame her. This man acted as a consultant to a local development firm. The mayor of Mississauga has now proposed that some other property developers in Peel be investigated for possible tax evasion facilitated by the same man. How these firms remained unaware that their tax consultant was actually moonlighting from our national tax authority will require some explaining.

There are several issues here that are troubling. There is the fact that so far no mayor in this province has suffered similar criminal victimization. There is also the acceptance that invective and threats to sue, activities ill-mannered and tawdry at best, are somehow excused by 'press' or 'democratic' freedoms. How best can we in our Town entrench a respect for civil due process so that we can maintain our status as a great place to live into the future?

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