

Making News

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Most often this space chronicles things that have already happened, or asks questions or prompts discussion about the kinds of issues Caledon residents face daily. Issues like traffic, the alleged need for a blasting quarry, filling a lake with garbage or why and how certain decisions get made at Council. This week however, we're talking about making news.

This is a 'Part Two' of sorts, a look at what's coming up over the month of September for Caledon residents and how you can be a part of it? With so many things happening in, and impacting residents of, our once beautiful town ? maybe it's time you too started being a part of making news happen here.

We have shared information in this space before about how your municipal government is the one that most directly impacts how you live your day-to-day life. However, given how much is going on in and around Caledon lately, we think the reiteration is important. The municipality governs garbage collection, water and sewers, police and fire, parks and recreation and, of concern to many of us in Caledon, local roadways. It is the decisions made at local Council that will help contribute to how safe local roads are, whether your child has access to a park to play in and whether your groundwater supply is potentially at risk by a decision to allow construction infill in a fully rehabilitated aquatic ecosystem. Council is accountable to you, the municipal taxpayer, but the system only works as well as each participant in it.

That means, as individuals sometimes WE need to step up as much as we expect our Councillors and Mayor to do the same. It means making time to attend an open house that will address the proposed site alteration bylaw concerning Swan Lake. Alternatively, it might mean attending a Council meeting, whether that's in person or virtually. There are options to accommodate your busy schedules so that you can speak to a matter from the comfort of your home or, you can even submit your comments online, through a form on the Town's website, so that they become part of the public record.

You may even want to weigh in on matters that are the responsibility of both municipal and provincial governments, such as housing. Did you know, for example, what 'Gentle Density' is? Strictly speaking, the idea is to add to existing housing supply through increasing housing options in single-family neighbourhoods. These housing options might include 'less-disruptive' housing types like duplexes, townhomes or backyard suites. In the current market, with nowhere for seniors to downsize and homes unaffordable to those young adults just starting out in life, gentle density is appealing.

When done properly, with care, control and consideration through bylaws and other regulations, it makes good sense. But you might also want to know that under the Planning Act, 'Gentle Density' housing legislation might permit up to four (4) 'additional residential units' on a property. An 'ARU' is defined as: 'a second and a third residential unit in addition to a primary residential unit, for a total of up to four units, on a residential lot containing a detached house, semi-detached house or townhouse.' It's important to stay informed as residents if we expect our municipal government to also be informed, to listen to our concerns and to act accordingly.

It means we MUST play an active role in the process. Be a part of making news happen in a constructive way and have your say.

Also impacting us locally, but like the housing issue, is also tied to the province, is the building of Highway 413. Just last week Premier Ford, the Minister of Transportation and our Mayor gathered at the side of the road on Highway 10, with fully-loaded 18-wheelers flying past them at an alarming speed (maybe their dust is what made the Premier cough so much) to announce that the first two contracts have been awarded for the building of Highway 413. Trotting out the same old tired lines that the highway will supposedly save commuters 30 minutes on their daily commute, Ford is now also claiming that with the highway he is 'doubling down' to stand up to Trump tariffs ? to protect Canadian workers.? He followed that with a comment that the highway would be built despite naysayers, and that the 407 wasn't a viable option because of a rather questionable view that trucks, when exiting it, 'would be backed up to Timbuktu.'

Riley Murphy provided an excellent summation of the announcement in last week's paper, and asked the Premier a great, and pointed question about the local impacts of a potential re-route based on the request of a prominent developer because the highway would otherwise cut through their building site.

While the request was denied, it seems to me Caledon is dealing with a substantial number of 'prominent developer' requests in general lately and it really makes one wonder how much say developers actually have. Many, including those at Environmental Defense, and this author, feel this particular construction project is entirely unnecessary and will have serious, long-term and detrimental impacts on the environment, but without the cumulative impact of many voices, and now, the awarding of these first two contracts, it seems doomed to proceed.

While the location of the announcement was a closely guarded secret, at least a handful of protestors were able to be onsite to share their concerns - kudos! These folks made it into the camera shot while the Premier was speaking, literally making news happen live. They should be an inspiration to all residents on how to be heard even when most would prefer your silence.

Also happening soon, Bolton residents in particular may want to take note of their own opportunity to be a part of the planning process. Take some time to learn more about the Bolton North Secondary Plan, a proposal that would allow for more than 4,000 homes to be built on (and near) Highway 50, north of Bolton. That's a significant number of homes and even more people! That meeting takes place September 16, with information boards available to peruse at Town Hall beginning at 6 pm, and the public meeting taking place at 7 pm. Information on a local subwatershed study will also be available. Finally, for those interested in commercial and truck traffic you may also want to be a part of a public meeting on the potential extension of Simpson Road to Mayfield Road, with that meeting also taking place September 16 at Town Hall.

We'll end by reaffirming one final way you too can make news happen and/or get involved. Plans have been solidified for a Caledon-wide community protest on September 6, happening between 2 - 3 p.m. Just one hour of your time is needed to help make our collective voices heard about dangerous truck traffic, illegal trucking yards, flaws in the truck training and licensing system and to demand safer roads everywhere.

We are at a crossroads here in Caledon and across the country, but neither the municipality, nor the provincial government will take the matter seriously unless, collectively, we all use our voice to advocate for change. I urge you once again whether your concern is with truck and traffic safety, risks to our drinking water, housing, pits and quarries or environmental degradation, don't just be a bystander - make news happen and share your concerns in one of the many ways outlined here.