

Marolyn Morrison will not seek another term as Caledon's mayor

By Bill Rea

Caledon voters will be picking a new mayor this fall.

Incumbent Marolyn Morrison announced this week she will not be seeking another term at the helm of the Town.

She commented that she will have been in office 11 years when the current term expires later this year. She said she and her husband John have discussed it, and concluded this will be an appropriate time to step aside.

"John and I, we'd now like time together," she said.

She added her husband plans to retire from his high school teaching position in Orangeville in February 2015.

Morrison said the couple's plans including spending more time with their nine grandchildren.

"We want to travel before we're too old to do it," she said. "I know we have some good years left."

"This is not a Marolyn-only decision; it's a John and Marolyn decision," she added. "If we're going to spend the rest of our lives together, we have to continue to be supportive of each other's decisions."

As well, Morrison said it's time to hand the brass chain of Caledon politics to someone else.

"It's time for someone new," she said. "It's time for a fresh set of eyes."

Morrison agreed the last couple of years have not been easy, with conflicts with developers and police investigations against her which turned up nothing. She said it would have been easy to have walked away from the 2010 campaign, adding her husband asked her then what she wanted to do, and she said her inclination was to dig in her heels and fight.

"That's the girl! I married and that's what I would have expected," she said was his reply.

Morrison wouldn't speculate on who her successor might be.

"I think we have to see who comes forward," she commented.

But she hopes that person will uphold the values of the community.

"I've tried very hard to do that," she said.

She also chuckled that there's been some speculation she's planning to seek the position of Chair of Peel Region (current Chair Emil Kolb has announced he'll be leaving at the end of the term), adding she has no such thoughts.

"I'm retiring, period," she declared.

Morrison's political career started in 1988, when she successfully ran for a seat on what was then known as the Peel Board of Education. She spent six years as a trustee, including three as vice-chair of the board, before serving three terms as Regional councillor for Ward 2.

Morrison said she had been feeling frustrated as a councillor, and in 2003, she broached the idea of running for mayor. Her husband said he would support her, but on the condition that they take one term to make sure they could make it work.

"I have to say the first year was tough," she said. "I was hardly ever at home for dinner. I was hardly ever home."

He eventually asked her to be home for dinner at least three nights per week, before going out to meetings.

"All right, I can make that work," she recalled saying; and she did.

"I couldn't ask for a more supportive husband," Morrison said. "He's always given me that support in anything I've wanted to do."

She added he was always there to run things by. "That's what made the job fairly easy," she said.

Morrison reflected on accomplishments that have been realized in her time in office, although she was reluctant to take many bows.

A lot of them involved the efforts of others, like councillors, municipal staff and residents.

"All the things you do do, I think, are part of normal business," she observed.

The list included increasing non-residential tax assessment in the town, adding more than nine million square feet in non-residential gross floor area between 2004 and 2013, being named Ontario's greenest town, the initiation of the Bolton Transportation Master Plan and the Caledon East Community Plan, the progress on the Bolton Arterial Road (BAR), the double ice arena in Caledon East, the permanent skateboard park in Bolton, the Bolton Rotary Peace park, Johnston Sports Park, being named Canada's safest community by McLean's three years in a row, the establishment of Caledon Farmers' Market, the work of the Town's Graffiti Committee, etc. Morrison is also past-chair of the Credit Valley Conservation Foundation, co-founder of the Greater Toronto Countryside Mayors' Alliance and was presented medals commemorating both the Golden and Diamond Jubilees of the Queen.

"Of course I'll miss it," Morrison said as she reflected on life away from politics.

She said she'll especially miss the interaction with people, as well as helping to face the challenges coming for Caledon.

"It would be fun to be part of it," she observed, "but there's a time when you've got to be able to back away."

Morrison said she has no plans to involve herself in political issues once she leaves office, commenting it would be a big mistake "to

constantly stick your nose in.?

?I think you have to let the new people chart their own course,? she remarked.

One of the challenges she sees coming is a push to impose representation by population at Regional council. ?If that happens, Caledon goes down to one (councillor), which is ridiculous,? she declared, adding the next mayor will have to work hard to defend the town's voice at the table. That's especially important because of the anticipated growth.

While she won't be involved in municipal government, Morrison said she doesn't anticipate being idle. She said she would probably do volunteer work, and she's looking forward to going to Aquafit. She's also anticipating being able to see friends without them having to make an appointment.

?There's no way I'll sit around,? she said. ?I think there'll be lots of things to do. ?I don't think there's going to be a lot of down time.

