

Mayor Marolyn Morrison ? We're getting Caledon ready to deal with aging population

I recently attended an excellent presentation at the Caledon Seniors' Advisory Committee about Creating an Age-Friendly Caledon and, specifically, how important it is to plan now for the needs of a new generation of older adults.

Like all other communities, Caledon needs to prepare for the inevitable demographic shift in our population.

In 1961, one in 14 Canadians was older than 65 years of age, about seven per cent of our overall population. By 2011, the ratio had increased to 14 per cent, and by 2031 nearly one quarter (25 per cent) of Canadians will be older than 65. This is a startling certainty that we, as municipal decision-makers and managers, must thoroughly understand and plan to accommodate. The reality of an aging, retiring population is that all levels of government will face higher demands for services and a consequent increase in cost, while facing reduced tax revenues from fewer taxpayers.

There are a number of approaches to evaluating a community's preparedness to meet the needs of its aging population. The Town of Caledon is examining each of them carefully and I have established an ad hoc committee to review the 'age-friendliness' of Caledon within the principles espoused by the World Health Organization. We need to ask ourselves if we are planning ahead to meet the needs of all our future residents in terms of both active and passive transportation, accessible and affordable housing, social services, recreation and health care.

I will be meeting with all major developers in our community to seek their cooperation in designing homes that promote aging-in-place; I will be encouraging developers to consider Universal (or Flex) Design ? a broad-spectrum solution that produces buildings, products and environments that are usable and effective for everyone, not just people with special requirements.

I look forward to Caledon being at the forefront once again as we begin, today, to evaluate the community's age-friendly status, adjust our plans and establish proper priorities to meet the future needs of all of our residents.

