

Mayoral candidates present their solutions to some of Caledon's biggest issues

By Zachary Roman

Ahead of the final voting day in Caledon's municipal election, October 24, The Citizen asked candidates for Mayor, Annette Groves and Jennifer Innis, for their answers on topics that have dominated election conversation. Candidates were asked to answer in 500 words or less, and answers have been edited for clarity and brevity.

1. There's some areas in Caledon where one could argue infrastructure was not built in time to match growth, which in turn has negatively impacted residents' quality of life. If elected as Mayor, how will you ensure future developments are properly planned for and serve to improve Caledon residents' lives?

Jennifer Innis

Residents should enjoy the convenience and health benefits of a safe and walkable community with access to everyday amenities. Caledon is set to see immense growth. Connectivity is key. Under my leadership, Caledon will build complete communities, and residents will have access to healthcare, education, recreation and employment. Communities will be designed to connect us through cycling and walking trails and public transit. Improvements [will be made] to regional roads like Hwy. 50 that must handle the volume of traffic that can easily connect to provincial highways.

I am proud of my work to secure the location for Caledon's first GO train! The Caledon-Vaughan GO Line is now part of the Ministry of Transportation master plan. A transit-supported, connected community will be built around this new GO station.

A future university or college campus will be included in the Town's new Official Plan and I have already begun discussions with post-secondary institutions to start programs here in Caledon (where they can) grow with us until we can realize a full campus.

Access to schools within the communities where our children live is important to building a strong sense of community. During this past term, I'm proud to have worked with Peel Public School Board Trustee, Stan Cameron, to secure a rebuild of Caledon East Public School. The current school ranked the lowest based on its condition in all of Caledon. This new school will accommodate growth in Caledon East, keeping our children together and in our community.

Access to healthcare is important for us all. While the province has not approved a new hospital or urgent care centre for Caledon, we need to advocate for this. Working with existing service providers and the Ministry of Health, we will deliver ambulatory care in communities such as Bolton and Southfields. As Chair of Government Relations for Peel Region, we recently met with the Minister of Health to discuss the needs for a new hospital and better funding formula, so the burden is not on our residents to pay for a new hospital.

Annette Groves

This is a critical election for Caledon as the decisions Council makes over the next four years will affect Caledon for generations. We're already seeing the effects the previous Council's decisions had on the town. Traffic, growth and costs are all skyrocketing. The issues facing Caledon are a direct result of bad decisions and poor planning by previous councils that allowed out of control development in areas that don't have appropriate infrastructure.

I favour a strict approach to planning that would force developers to follow modern ideas of designing communities, and keep them out of the greenbelt and other ecologically sensitive areas. I'll make sure policies are in place in the Official Plan that developers can't challenge. I have always said infrastructure needs to come before development and growth needs to pay for growth. This means developers need to pay for infrastructure required to service their planned developments. A financial analysis needs to be done on what the infrastructure is going to cost the Town. The cost of growth should never be put on the backs of existing taxpayers.

As Mayor, I will focus on smart growth where communities connect to communities and ensure developers build not just houses, but fully liveable, walkable communities that accommodate transit and prepare for the impacts of climate change. I will make developers include places for people to work, play and live. People need places to eat and shop and parks to play in ? not just houses. New schools have to be included in plans so kids can go to school close to home. Communities should have trails that connect into the trail network and include appropriate retail commercial opportunities. Communities need recreation facilities with programs for seniors, children and youth and they must be accessible to allow for the integration of people with special needs.

We need to plan better smart developments where people can live and work in their own community which will leave people with real time to spend with family and friends and improve their quality of life. Infrastructure is not just roads. It is water, power, sewers and more. It is parks and facilities for residents to use and enjoy. Infrastructure is also our first responders: fire, police and ambulance services. As Caledon grows, we need to ensure our emergency services grow to ensure we are able to provide a safe and healthy community. Every village and hamlet in Caledon is unique. What works on one side of town may not work on another but as Mayor, I will represent and work with all residents across Caledon and ensure every corner of Caledon is protected from out-of-control development. For too long developers have told Caledon what they are going to build. It is time for residents to tell developers what Caledon needs.

2. Traffic safety, and truck traffic, have been focal points for voters this election. If elected, what can be done within your powers as Mayor to expedite improvements to the safety of our roads, protecting our pedestrians, cyclists and motorists alike?

Annette Groves

The high volume of traffic our residents contend with and the amount of trucks on our roads is a direct result of very poor planning and bad decisions made by the previous Council that allowed out of control development in areas that do not have the proper infrastructure. The ever-increasing number of trucks driving through our villages and hamlets are a direct result of decisions made by those same Councillors to turn Caledon into a freight village. They told us these businesses would generate a lot of revenue but they have continuously voted to raise residents' taxes, twice during the pandemic and again in 2022.

As Mayor, I will [advocate for] increased police presence in our villages and hamlets to go after bad drivers and the unsafe commercial vehicles on our roads, as well as increase fines as a financial deterrent. I will call on the Ministry of Transportation to increase the amount of officers they have doing spot checks in Caledon including holding seasonal blitzes to remove dangerous vehicles off of our roads.

Across the entire town, I will install traffic calming measures such as speed humps, flashing warning lights as well as red light cameras and automated speed enforcement tools where appropriate to bring people into compliance with the rules of the road.

We need to get the trucks onto Hwy. 407 for free right now. This is something that can be done immediately and would alleviate a lot of the commuter traffic drivers deal with. I will work with regional, provincial and federal partners to continue my advocacy for the extension of Hwy. 427 North to Hwy. 89 running through the existing hydro corridor; as well as advocating for the extension of Hwy. 410 to Hwy. 9 and at the same time widening Hwy. 9. This will create a ?ring road? around Caledon taking trucks and heavy commercial vehicles out of our local villages and hamlets like Caledon Village, Palgrave, Caledon East and Bolton. I will continue to work with the region to widen Hwy. 50 from Rutherford to Mayfield as well as widening Mayfield from Airport to Hwy. 50 and widening Coleraine South of Mayfield. This will take a lot of pressure off our existing infrastructure.

Jennifer Innis

Road safety is paramount. As Regional Councillor for Wards 3 & 4, I've worked diligently on the improvement and safety of our local and regional roads. In the Village of Palgrave, we completed the Environmental Assessment; the reconstruction of Regional Road 50 through the Village with new sidewalks and street lighting; added a new streetlight at Patterson and Regional Road 50; sidewalks along Patterson so children could walk to school; added a new crosswalk for the elementary school and at the Caledon

Trailway crossing. This also included traffic calming measures to slow traffic through the village.

In Caledon East, the Airport Road Environmental Assessment is completed from Huntsmill Drive to King Street. The Region is currently in the detailed design phase. Upon completion, the Village of Caledon East will have all new sidewalks, the addition of trees, and new overhead lights and benches. There will be new entry features into the Village and designs to help slow traffic through the Village core. Over my eight years, regional staff have exhaustively researched potential bypass solutions for truck traffic around the Village. Due to topography, the natural environment, and safety, there are no options for a bypass. Therefore, we must slow down the traffic entering our village to make it safe for our residents. The improvements to the Airport Road Corridor will help make this a reality. I have worked extensively on traffic calming measures for Caledon East, including new stop signs, crosswalks, and sidewalk extensions.

I advocated for the implementation of all-day parking in downtown Bolton to make this area more walkable. These parking spaces will also allow for patios next summer throughout the core, expanding opportunities for local restaurateurs and supporting our revitalization plan for Bolton.

The permanent introduction of speed enforcement cameras throughout our village cores will help to slow traffic and will be a priority. We will continue to advocate for red-light cameras, stop arm cameras and speed enforcement along Hwy. 10 and Hwy. 9.

As the Councillor who initiated the active transportation task force with an emphasis for Caledon to become a bicycle friendly community; we need to continue our efforts to build cycling and walking infrastructure so residents can walk and cycle to where they need to be; and [provide] an opportunity for smart cycling tourism to support our local businesses. Paving our shoulders not only provides a safe place for cyclists and walkers, it also saves tax dollars on maintenance and [increases] lifespan of our roads.

Caledon will continue to work with our provincial and regional counterparts on Vision Zero. We will continue to engage our Caledon OPP, focusing on priority areas of concern. Reviewing our police service as we grow to ensure the needs for service and community safety are met, will be a constant priority as your Mayor.

3. Caledon's proximity to cities and abundant green space make it a truly unique Town. If elected, what will you do to preserve the character of Caledon?

Jennifer Innis

My plan is to balance our natural heritage and agricultural roots and build sustainable communities that reflect Caledon's character. 80 per cent of Caledon's land is protected countryside through the Greenbelt, Oak Ridges Moraine and Niagara Escarpment. My plan will support our agricultural community in the protected areas and support our businesses so they are successful. We will enhance our Shop Local program; provide tourism opportunities to showcase and support our local businesses through programs and events; and make revitalization of our village cores a priority. I will also advocate for a concierge service for our entrepreneurs to help navigate our departments and services so they can focus on their business development.

I am proud of the work I have been able to do this past term on the revitalization of Downtown Bolton: Ensuring all-day parking, community safety zones, and working with local businesses for patio provisions; working to establish community space where residents can gather, learn, and connect; building a more walkable and safe community core, where our businesses can thrive. But there is still much, much more to do in Bolton and many of our villages.

My plan will use new employment areas to build a strong employment base that respects our agricultural heritage and ensures food security for Caledon, our region and beyond. We'll attract new businesses in agricultural sciences, local growing, processing and distribution, welcoming technology and innovation to feed our future. This will also provide an opportunity for people to live where they work and reduce the tax burden on our residents

I ran for Council eight years ago because the Caledon I know and love has changed a lot in my lifetime. Caledon will be here for

your children and mine with leadership and a strong voice at the table planning our future.

Annette Groves

I will not support any Minister's Zoning Orders (MZOs) that have been used by previous Councils here in Caledon to circumvent the democratic process and skip environmental assessments and public input. I will not allow any encroachment into our greenspace and our rural countryside.

Caledon is a community of green, clean, safe, quiet, friendly villages and rural areas. A community respectful of our natural and cultural heritage. I am committed to keeping Caledon a healthy and stable community. A community that establishes well-planned and designed settlements that have sufficient infrastructure and services, supports a thriving business and agricultural community, protects the environment, and maintains what is positive and unique about Caledon.

As Mayor, I will stop unchecked development and make sure it's Caledon and its residents planning our future communities, not developers. I will support heritage designations where appropriate and work with all councillors in all wards to ensure their residents have a say in all future planning of Caledon. I will not rip up farmland or allow our town to be paved over to suit the desires of developers and I will continue to support a moratorium on all new aggregate licenses, as well as expansions of aggregate pits and gravel mining operations. I will create an aggregate advisory committee consisting of local residents as I have tried to do for six years.

I will ensure the Town enforces our rules and by-laws and make sure illegal truck and container yards no longer litter our community. I will implement new by-laws so the gateways to Caledon are kept clean.

I will invest in beautification and revitalization of our villages and hamlets. We should all be proud of where we live. I have a proven track record of delivering for my constituents and as Mayor I will continue to put residents first and prepare Caledon for the future, while respecting our past and protecting our quality of life.