

New procedures at Town Hall

By Bill Rea

At first glance, one might think things have been tightened down at Caledon Town Hall for some reason, possibly security.

But municipal officials are arguing it's more a matter of efficiency.

The aim is to help members of the public navigate the facility in Caledon East, aiming them in the direction they need to go to get the service or information they are seeking.

That is done through Service Caledon, which was launched last week. Service Caledon is based at the counter right at the main doors to Town Hall. The idea is the public is greeted at the desk by a staff member, who asks what they are seeking. They are then provided the information they require, or a steered in the right direction.

One feature of the new system is that access to the main atrium of the building is controlled, with entry being granted by staff at the Service Caledon desk. As well, directional arrows have been installed on the floor to guide people more frequently visited departments.

Mayor Allan Thompson said these controls will not be in effect when there are council or committee meetings at Town Hall.

A backgrounder issued by the Town stresses this is not an effort to restrict access to Town Hall.

'Town Hall remains a building open to the public and access to council/committee meetings remains,' it stated.

Town CAO Mike Galloway said the aim is to try to solve as many inquiries 'at the first point of contact' as possible.

'The first point of contact is the front counter,' he added.

Galloway said there are many cases in which people are directed from one person to another to another, etc.

'We're trying to be a bit more innovative, as a government sector partner,' he observed.

He said the people manning the desk have been trained to deal with various issues and requests.

The backgrounder said this is part of the Council Work Plan effort to improve customer service. Part of that involved understanding the state of service at the Town through surveys and observations of front-line staff.

Key findings included revelations of difficulties navigating the phone system, people running into challenges finding their way around Town Hall, few issues being resolved at the first point of contact, and insufficient delivery or lack of training when it comes to customer service.

Other adjustments that have been made include changes to the town's phone system and email points of contact, and additional training for employees.

'It's not something new that just popped up,' Galloway commented.

He also agreed the new system has not yet been perfected.

'The reaction's been very positive, but again, it's new,' he said. 'There are going to be kinks to iron out.'

Thompson said one of the aims is to have staff help people to where they need to go.

'It's not locking out the public,' he asserted. 'It's helping the public get where they want to go.'