

Open letter to Council on affordable housing

OUR READERS WRITE

Many of us homeowners too are shocked at the skyrocketing prices of our homes: we lament the deep despair that so many people, especially young couples, experience trying to buy their first home. How can our various level of government mishandle this vital portfolio resulting in home prices' bubbles impacting the lives of millions?

Forgotten in all of this is the large swath of people at the lowest end of the socio-economic ladder who struggle to find an affordable place to rent. We in Caledon do not achingly see people sleeping on heat grates or between cardboard sheets as in large urban areas. We do, however, have fellow towners who couch-surf, sleep in cars, are homeless and hover on the edge of the housing precipice.

Census Canada Stats 2016 puts 9% of our families, that is almost one in ten, in core and even in severe core housing need. In order to keep a roof over their heads, hundreds of households, including seniors, families and people with disabilities, depend on food and supports from the Caledon Community Services' Exchange and other local agencies, We know that the main culprit of so much hardship and despair is the lack of affordable rental housing.

The Region of Peel, our engine for social rental housing, is unable to keep up with the demand. 5,800 new units by the year 2034 does not come close to meeting the need of 14,500 to 18,000 households on the ever-increasing waiting list. The situation is desperate and becomes worse every year. What to do?

Can our Town tackle our immediate and pressing housing needs while at the same time actively advocating for Caledon in the Region's long-term Homelessness and Housing Strategy? Promising subsidized housing in the next 10 or 20 years from now is well and good. But what about the families caught in severe housing distress, now?

What about opening all neighbourhoods for second suites and providing generous grants and direction to home-owners for their homes' conversion?

In a town awash in private developments, can't Council demand that developers build a percentage of their units as rentals for low income families while at the same time compensating them with lower development fees and slightly higher density? Many jurisdictions have been doing this successfully.

Can't the Town secure federal Rapid Housing funds through the Region and build modular homes on some suitable municipal lands, as is happening in Toronto?

We elect you to provide good governance for all sectors of our people. As we review the Official Plan, special mention could be made of our ongoing social obligation to provide affordable purpose-built rentals for families in core housing need.

For the Region of Peel, homelessness and unaffordable housing in Caledon represent only a minute percentage of their problem. In a funding squeeze, they will drop the only planned subsidized development in Caledon at the Coleraine and Emil Kolb parkway intersection. For you, Caledon Council, providing assisted housing for needy families is a hundred percent of your moral responsibility.

Carmel Hili Caledon