

Shaughnessy's view on Canadian Tire's hydrogen plant

I am not against hydrogen as a fuel, but I am for an open and public process.

Right now, the ability for Canadian Tire to have a hydrogen production facility on site is being treated like a minor site plan amendment. As such, the Planning Act does not require the Town of Caledon to have a full public process, even though many residents are concerned.

Canadian Tire obtained a Minister Zoning Order (MZO) in July 2013 to construct their new Distribution Centre.

The first item of the MZO states "accessory means a use, building or structure that is normally incidental, or subordinate to the principal use . . . including but not limited to . . ." An on site hydrogen production plant to create the fuel for equipment such as forklifts is not a normal land use accessory to distribution centres. None of the distribution centres in Caledon have hydrogen production plants.

Even the legal counsel for Option 3 of the Bolton Residential Expansion Study (BRES) agrees there should be concern. Stating in their written comments to Regional council for the BRES July meeting, "The compatibility of siting new urban growth in Bolton in close proximity to a potential hydrogen distribution, storage, and production facility has not been fully considered," and they added this issue needs to be "fully canvassed."

Herein lays the problem. If the Town of Caledon interprets the MZO as permitting hydrogen production, then it becomes the new normal for any other Distribution Centre to have the same type of facility. I am not comfortable with that. I believe the Town of Caledon should do its due diligence and make an open, transparent and traceable Land Use Planning Decision about hydrogen production. Study the issue, make all relevant reports available to the public, hold a proper Public Information Meeting and bring a report to council for approval. Answer the questions; what are the risks? Where and under what conditions should hydrogen production plants be permitted and how many is too many?

I have supported Councillor Groves' several attempts to have a public process. All of which have been thwarted by council. At last week's meeting, Groves again attempted to bring a motion forward but was denied. In a recorded vote, all members of council except myself and Groves, voted not to waive the procedural bylaw to allow the motion to come forward.

The Town-approved site plans for the Canadian Tire development have included a hydrogen fuelling station, but no production facility and no building plan was sent to the Ministry when the MZO was requested. As quoted in the Toronto Star Oct. 21, 2014, then Minister Linda Jeffrey said "In our interaction with this file at MMAH, hydrogen was never raised." In the same article, then Councillor Allan Thompson indicated when asked about hydrogen use in the project stated, "I was not aware of it."

The MZO is a pretty detailed document. It discusses setbacks required for the dispensing of gasoline, maximum heights of lighting fixtures and the floor space permitted for a place of worship.

The word "hydrogen" does not appear in the MZO, not even once. In my opinion, then it was not considered. As such, an amendment to the MZO to permit the production of hydrogen is required and this would lead to a public process. I don't get why the rest of council does not see this.

In addition, Canadian Tire had every opportunity to have hydrogen production included in its MZO but failed to do so. Now they want to insert a hazardous hydrogen production use into their site plan without full public review.

Decide for yourself. I have attached a copy of the Canadian Tire MZO on www.CaledonWard1.ca

Barb Shaughnessy,

Regional Councillor, Ward 1,

Town of Caledon