

Sinclair outlines his problems with Canadian Tire development

A voter recently approached Ian Sinclair, candidate for mayor of Caledon, with the question ? ?Do you support the Canadian Tire warehouse??

He provided her with a comprehensive and thoroughly considered answer.

Sinclair's short answer was, ?It's great to have Canadian Tire in Caledon. However the chosen location is unsuitable for the intensity of use, and the council decision process was deeply flawed.?

His longer answer is as follows.

Company

?Canadian Tire is one of the few great Canadian retail success stories. I recall my teenage friends working at the original Davenport and Yonge Street store in Toronto, picking orders on roller skates. This firm has amazing logistics that enable them to have products manufactured, shipped, and distributed to each store at the same time a flyer is sent. Their staff are tops and well treated by the firm. The project in Caledon includes a massive distribution warehouse, trucking yard and offices. This will bring badly needed assessment growth and employment to Caledon. Over time, employees will move into Caledon and support our retail businesses in Bolton where added trade is desperately needed.?

?The approval of Canadian Tire should have been a celebration of meaningful community consultation, fair and professional land use planning, and an example of Caledon showing GTA businesses that our municipality is a great place to locate.?

?But, Caledon council blew it.?

Location

?Coleraine Drive was identified as part of the Bolton Arterial Road (BAR) system through a very long and costly environmental assessment. The problem to be solved was to significantly remove heavy truck traffic in the old core of the village by constructing a ring of alternative routes ? Vaughan Line, Industrial Road, George Bolton, Coleraine from Highway 50 to King, and then a new link from King up and over to Highway 50 north of the village. A good part of this system has either been built or is under construction. A key section of the BAR has not been done ? rebuilding Coleraine between Mayfield and Highway 50 with substantial intersection improvements at Highway 50.?

?Locating industrial and modest distribution centres along Coleraine, designated and designed as a truck route, seems like good land use planning, especially when a heavy equipment auctioneer, large manufacturing plants and shipping firms are already located along the road. However, the sheer size of the Canadian Tire complex, with its associated high volume of truck movements (estimates vary from 350 per day up to 750 per day) is beyond the current road capacity to accommodate. Bolton residents must commute south on Highway 50 in the midst of many heavy trucks and they are intimidated now and very apprehensive about any additional risk to themselves and their families. Quite a number of Bolton home owners have said to me they intend to move away in the near future because of the bad traffic despite liking Bolton village.?

?It has been repeatedly stated by Town staff that the Healey-Coleraine location was the only 180-acre site available in Caledon adjacent to a heavy truck route. This is hard to believe, when such a substantial firm is involved and there are experienced real estate brokers in Caledon who could easily have assembled 180 to 200 acres of land somewhere along the north side of Mayfield Road or Airport Road over a period of three or more years, which I understand was the time period Canadian Tire was looking for a new site. Note the large new Acklands-Granger distribution centre appropriately located at Dixie and Mayfield.?

?Residents along Healey Road who thought they lived a half mile from the industrial area surrounded by agriculture now suddenly find themselves beside a monstrous distribution complex running 24/7. This will surely result in MPAC appeals for reduced assessment values on the affected residential lands.?

?Municipal land use decisions concerning new residential sub-divisions, major industrial or gravel strip mines have permanent influences lasting hundreds of years and should be thought through carefully and with humility, not with a short term view to making a buck.?

Decision process

?There was an Open House in August 2012 for the Canadian Tire proposal. I understand it was badly handled by council, as they failed to supply two floor microphones for public questions. Consequently, there was no way to coordinate one speaker from the floor at a time, and a shouting row occurred. A second Public Information Meeting (PIM) was held when Canadian Tire modified their proposal to include an office block attached to the warehouse. At this second meeting, a ?moderator' was hired to run the meeting at a cost exceeding \$4,000 for the evening while members of council sat up on a dais and said nothing all evening. During the moderator's introduction, he pointed three different times to a fully armed, uniformed OPP officer at the back and stated that if he

did not like the way people were speaking or behaving they would be removed. I had never seen anything like this in my 35 years involvement in Caledon politics and it felt like a foreign dictatorial experience. Later, when residents were able to ask questions, only Canadian Tire consultants were allowed to answer, not Town staff. The consultants mouthed words, failing to address residents' concerns for their health, safety and property values. When residents protested that Canadian Tire consultants failed to address their issues, the moderator rudely told them to get to the back of the line. None of the residents' issues were meaningfully addressed in the final Town planning staff report to council.?

?A rare provision of the Planning Act was invoked by the Minister of Municipal Affairs called a Ministerial Zoning Order (MZO), following a request by the Caledon Mayor and CAO who it has been discovered, were working for up to two years prior to the council decision of approval, to have the MZO used. The effect of the MZO is to block citizen appeals of council decisions to the Ontario Municipal Board. I cannot find any council motions authorizing the Mayor and CAO to contact the Minister of Municipal Affairs and lobby for the MZO. There may have been council discussions 'in camera' but these are secret.?

?Caledon residents deserve far better in the future, and I'm prepared to deliver for them.?