

Talk of the Town by Mayor Allan Thompson ? Bolton is ?worth standing up for?

Bolton is a great community, worth standing up for.

Last week at Regional council, I stood with Regional Councillors Shaughnessy, Innis, Downey, Miles, Moore, Ras, Saito and Sprovieri in opposition of a motion put forward from the floor to support the Solmar Development (known as Option 6) as the preferred development for the Bolton Residential Expansion.

This has been an ongoing matter which began with an extensive public planning process and a peer review which led to six options being weighed using criteria critically important to the future sustainability of Bolton. Option 6 (Solmar Development) came in last place in this public, open and transparent process. The main reason for it placing last is the very reason used by some councillors in Mississauga and Brampton to push it to first last week. As per the Provincial Policy Statement 2014 (Planning authorities shall protect employment areas in proximity to major goods movement facilities and corridors for employment uses that require those locations) these lands have been seen as prime employment, given their proximity to the GTA West Corridor and that it has access to services.

So what does that mean?

Right now in Caledon we have a tax base consisting of 80 per cent residential and 20 per cent commercial/industrial. In order for you, our residents, to be able to continue to afford living here, we need to increase our commercial/industrial tax base to 40 per cent. If we don't, our children and fixed income seniors will not be able to afford to live here. That's our reality. These employment lands have services and they need to because we cannot attract industrial commercial development without services; another reality. The councillors who put forward Option 6 last week justified their decision to set aside years of sound planning and a public process by saying it was the most economical for them, but it won't be for Caledon because we would then have to find a way to service other employment lands.

All of this was upsetting, what was further troubling were the statements and position of Regional Councillor Annette Groves, who voted for the motion supporting Solmar Option 6. I respect that every councillor is free to vote as they choose however; Caledon council had recently discussed, debated and voted on this issue. I was also disappointed and surprised that she spoke about Bolton as a ghost town, dying and a broken place. The Bolton I know is a community with a rich cultural heritage, a growing urban centre that has maintained a small town feel; it has residents who step up and volunteer to do wonderful things like plant the flower boxes in the spring or give the flagpole in the park a facelift. Last week I walked around downtown Bolton to ask the businesses how they were doing with the construction on King Rd., I met wonderful business owners who love Bolton and are staying in Bolton.

So what's next?

There will be a public open house Sept. 14 and a statutory public meeting Sept. 29 at the Region of Peel Offices. I will keep you updated on the process.

Bolton may be going through a transition, but it is very much alive and has so much to offer. It's a place worth standing up for.

