

Things not quiet on Canadian Tire front

By Bill Rea

The foes of the massive Canadian Tire development in Bolton's industrial area are still active, and are hoping to have a presence in the upcoming municipal elections.

About 30 were out for a meeting last Wednesday at Albion-Bolton Community Centre; a meeting that was a combination information session and pep rally.

Members of the group opposing the development, calling themselves Your Voice for Bolton, indicated they would like to have one more all-candidates' meeting to address these issues.

Your Voice for Bolton announced in an email to the Citizen office Tuesday, that they are planning a meeting for this coming Tuesday (Oct. 21) at 7 p.m. at the former Bolton Legion hall on Ann Street.

Canadian Tire is building a large distribution centre and office facility on about 180 acres at the northwest corner of Coleraine Drive and Healey Road. Caledon council approved the development in the summer of 2013, although many in the community were vocal in their opposition. Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister Linda Jeffrey subsequently issued Ministerial Zoning Order (MZO) to facilitate it the development.

The group has appealed the MZO to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB).

Kim Seipt told last week's meeting a pre-hearing meeting has been set for Nov. 25, and they have been busy getting prepared for that, even though it will fall about a month after the election.

"I think the election results will play a key role on how things will unfold," she told the meeting.

Seipt remarked the issue really hasn't come up for debate during the election campaign. While there have been a number of meetings involving candidates, she said they have really not been debates, with candidates taking stands on the issue.

Seipt commented that Canadian Tire was granted the MZO, thus bypassing the planning process that every other proponent of a development would be expected to follow, with the public getting the chance for input.

She added the group had to go through the Freedom of Information process to get hold of some 1,900 documents.

"It's pretty sickening," she remarked.

Seipt told the audience the MZO process still has a mechanism that allows for questioning of what the Minister did. Despite the opposition, she pointed out Canadian Tire was still given the go-ahead to build on the site.

"Here we are, in limbo," she commented.

"It's not a done deal until we've been through the board," she added, pointing out public opposition was able to get gas plants stopped on Oakville. "It's the principle for me. I'm a share holder in this town."

Seipt also stressed there's never been much opposition to Canadian Tire building this facility in Caledon. It's this exact location that has raised problems for the group. She said it's not on a major highway, so the truck traffic will have to use arterial roads, and she suggested those roads are not up to handling the load. She also worried about the number of accidents that will result.

As well, she pointed out there will be a number of subdivisions going in south of Mayfield Road, meaning Brampton residents will be impacted.

Seipt also raised the issue of diesel fumes come of the site and impacting the rest of Bolton. She said there needs to be more of a buffer to dissipate that.

Seipt also stressed the need for people to get out and support the opposition.

"I'm all for protesting," she said. "We need people to show up."

She also pointed out it's sometimes hard to get people out to these events when they're busy with other things.

Seipt couldn't say how things will go before OMB because there's little precedent for a situation like this. She said the last time an MZO was challenged was more than 30 years ago, and the matter was different from this one.

"In this case, we've got an outcry from the public," she said.