

Thompson gets much input out of Youth Summit

By Bill Rea

Some young people learned a lot from the recent Mayor's Youth Summit, and so did Mayor Allan Thompson.

The mayor recently hosted 81 students from the various high schools in town, getting their input.

This was the first time such an event has been held in Caledon, taking place at the Caledon Equestrian Park in Palgrave.

Thompson told the young people the theme of the day was "Your Voice, Your Community."

He added he was seeking input on what they want Caledon to look like 10 and even 20 years in the future. That included what programs and services they think are important, as well as what they think the best way is for the Town to communicate with them.

"There are no wrong answers here," he stressed. "We want all of your ideas."

"If you have a suggestion, I want to hear about it," he said.

He also told the participants about the importance and benefits of volunteering in the community. There were several volunteer agencies represented at the summit, and he urged the young people to collect information about them.

There was also a question-and-answer session, and participants took full advantage.

One girl asked about the lack of public transit in Caledon, and the mayor assured that is one item they are paying attention to.

"We need your engagement on that," he added.

He also pointed out there is transit service available for seniors and the disabled. Uber might be a possibility, but Thompson observed there are some risks when it comes to young people using it.

"There are a lot of things out there," he remarked. "There's a lot of new stuff coming down the pipe, but we have to look into it."

One of the young people commented on the lack of things for kids to do in town.

"You can only go bowling so many times," the young person said.

Thompson said the efforts to create community hubs could be part of the solution.

"We're social people," he observed. "We all need to hang out with people we identify with."

One boy complained about the condition of some of the rural roads, and the problems trying to ride a bike on a road that's not paved.

"I just have trucks and cars screaming by me constantly," he said.

Thompson told him any road reconstruction projects the Town is planning will include provisions for cycling lanes, agreeing cycling is something that needs to be taken seriously. He also said Peel Region has done a lot of work in this regard.

One girl was concerned that some trails are not properly maintained in winter, as she pointed out some people like to be able to take walks.

Thompson said he's tried to get the trails addressed, although he said he's not heard from a lot of people who consider it a priority.

Swimming facilities came up too. The pool near Caledon village had to be closed a couple of years ago because it had not been properly maintained.

"Lessons learned," he remarked, adding people in the rural areas of town deserve some facilities too. "We know we've got to find something."

One girl was concerned about the number of potholes on the roads.

"That's an ongoing question," Thompson replied.

He pointed out the Town is restricted in what it can do by the amount of tax money available. He also pointed out potholes help slow traffic down. If new pavement goes on a road, people start complaining about speeders.

The mayor also pointed out this is a concern throughout Ontario. The Association of Municipalities of Ontario estimate municipalities are about \$3.5 billion behind when it comes to maintaining their infrastructure. Other problems come into effect as well. He said the recent heavy rains had saturated gravel roads.