

Town councillors look hopefully to the coming year

By Bill Rea

As one year has come to an end and another started, Caledon councillors have been expressing satisfaction, and expectation.

There was also consideration of the challenges that are likely to be encountered in 2014.

Mayor Marolyn Morrison said she's looking forward to seeing progress on the residential expansion study in Bolton in the next few months.

She was also impressed with the progress being made by the Arts Committee, as well as the Seniors' Advisory Committee.

Morrison added she's looking forward this year to recommendations from the Arts Committee, observing that a municipality that fails to embrace the arts 'is missing something.'

She added she hopes this will lead to an arts facility for the town.

As well, the Graffiti Committee and the accompanying Graffiti Hotline have been a big success, she said.

Morrison was also pleased with the establishment of the Rotary Peace Park in Bolton. 'That actually was very important to me,' she commented.

As well, she said she's been working with the Central West Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) to have Caledon named the next municipality to get a hospital.

'We're moving forward on that,' she said.

Roads and infrastructure were on the minds of several councillors.

Councillor Allan Thompson said one of the accomplishments of 2013 was the development of a good work plan in that regard.

'It's something that's been needed for quite some time,' he remarked.

And while they posed their share of difficulties, Thompson was pleased with the way the Town stood up to weather events, including the heavy rains in July or the recent ice storm.

'We're heading for an exciting year,' he predicted, commenting there have been tax hikes over the last couple of years, and he figured people will soon start seeing them produce results. He said people see results of the Bolton Expansion Study, and plans for growth in Mayfield West should come to fruition.

'It was a hectic year,' Councillor Richard Whitehead observed, commenting there were a lot of issues dealt with that might not have been popular.

He said there was progress made on dealing with the future of Bolton, as well as stabilizing the finances of the Town.

'I think we're managing growth well,' he said, although he added the coming year will bring a number of matters that will have to be resolved, such as where Bolton is going to grow.

Whitehead also said Peel Region has been dealing with matters of infrastructure needs and costs, but there are going to have to be some decisions made. He added it's going to be an unusual situation because it's going to have to happen in an election year.

While the year ended dramatically, with the ice storm, Whitehead said he was impressed with the way people stood up to the situation. He said his own home was without power for about five and a half days. After the third day, he said he had to drain his water pipes and spend a couple of nights away from home. He likened the situation to the garbage dump debates about 20 years ago, when people came together at a time of crisis, got to know each other and learned to work together. He said situations like that make people appreciate each other and the community more.

'My New Year's resolution is to get a generator,' he added.

Councillor Rob Mezzapelli observed one of the biggest local issues last year was the massive Canadian Tire development planned for Bolton's industrial area.

'It generated a lot of interest and discussion,' he observed, adding he believes council was 'prudent' in the way it handled it.

'They cast the right vote on it,' he said.

Mezzapelli was also pleased with the budget that council passed last month, stressing the need to set aside money to replace and repair capital assets. He pointed out there are municipalities, like Toronto, that have some infrastructure that's in terrible shape.

'I know that Caledon is on the right path,' he observed.

Mezzapelli said the big issues for the coming year will include the review of various Provincial policies, and the impacts they will have on Caledon. He also is looking forward to the anticipated progress on the Bolton Residential Expansion Study and the growth plans in Mayfield West.

Mezzapelli also observed the aftermath of the ice storm will have to be addressed. He said his home didn't lose power, and he had people staying there, and kept track of the warming centres that were being operated in the area. Cleaning up the debris will be

something that council will have to address.

Councillor Richard Paterak observed that 2013 was dominated by some controversial decisions, including the Canadian Tire issue. Paterak stated such a proposal might not have caused much of a fuss normally.

‘But this year, it became the controversial darling of a small group of residents bent on discrediting a good proposal,’ he commented in a statement he issued. ‘Council did the sensible thing and rode out the storm. Canadian Tire will be built.’

He also observed that council recently had to choose between following the Town's Official Plan or bowing to the wishes of the neighbours of the Olympia Sand and Gravel property.

‘For me, this was gut wrenching because I too am a neighbour of this pit,’ he observed. ‘In the end, council understood that if you have an Official Plan, you must support it. If you don't like the Official Plan, then change it.’

‘Our aggregate policies do not allow us to necessarily oppose any pit, but they do allow us to oppose flawed applications,’ he added. ‘More particularly, those policies allow us to manage the resource to a higher degree than other municipalities. This latter part is poorly understood and should receive more public support than it does.’

Paterak said he expects the key issues in 2014 will involve the fact it's an election year, ‘and the public's appetite for understanding what is increasingly a very complex planning environment in Caledon.’

‘We have all of the Provincial plans in force in Caledon to which add a large portion of gravel to make it interesting,’ he observed. ‘All of this requires understanding of what is possible and what is not possible and to me that is what politics is: The art of the possible.’

Councillor Gord McClure also issued a statement, saying 2013 was a prosperous and successful year for the Town and Ward 2. He said the accomplishments included the Canadian Tire and attracting the Acklands-Grainger development at Dixie and Mayfield Roads.

He also said the year brought him two new grandchildren.

McClure said his aim for 2014 will be ‘making our town more prosperous.’

Councillor Doug Beffort cited a number of positive things taking place in the Town.

‘We're moving along with Mayfield West,’ he observed, adding growth is coming with some options remaining for that growth. He also agreed that maintaining infrastructure is an important consideration for all municipalities.

Beffort pointed to a need to look at the gravel industry in Ward 1 and look for opportunities there. He stressed the need for the Town to work with the industry, as well as residential groups. ‘They have some really good ideas,’ he said, but added there always seems to be confrontations with applications.

Councillor Patti Foley cited a number of accomplishments from 2013, including the completion of work on lights, trees and sidewalks on Bolton's north hill, the development of the Rotary Peace Park, the opening of the Humber River Heritage Park, and new roof at Albion-Bolton Community Centre, kitchen renovations at Caledon Seniors' Centre, groundbreaking at the Hampton Inn site in Bolton, creation of an Aging Population Committee at the Region, the multi-use trail on King Street West in Bolton, the Business Improvement Area's (BIA)'s first Blues and Jazz Festival, and the installation of traffic signals at Parr Boulevard.

‘That was a real safety issue,’ she commented.

Foley also mentioned the start on construction of the final component of the Bolton Arterial Road (BAR) and the water tower near Coleraine and Holland Drives.

Looking to the coming year, Foley said she anticipates the completion of the feedermain project in Bolton, as well as an improved municipal parking lot in the village core, complete with charging stations for electric vehicles.

Foley also said she's been working with some developers to get more seniors' housing.

‘This is something I would really look forward to seeing,’ she said, ‘a shovel in the ground.’

Councillor Nick deBoer said the last year was a successful one, with the Town's finances being more secure.

He was also glad to see a good start being made on getting the Caledon Equestrian Park ready for the 2015 Pan Am Games.

‘We're going to be able to showcase Caledon with it,’ he said.