

Transportation a Town priority in provincial election

By Bill Rea

The Town of Caledon has a list of priorities to be raised in the coming Provincial election, and there is lots of time to tweak it.

Town councillors were shown the list last week, and there were concerns expressed about items that were not included.

Councillor Barb Shaughnessy wanted to see some mention of a possible bypass for Caledon village.

'That is a growth-related situation,' she remarked.

Councillor Annette Groves wanted to see something included about extending Highway 427.

The staff report to councillors pointed out the next election is scheduled for June 7, and that will provide an opportunity for residents and businesses to communicate with candidates, as well as the municipality.

'By endorsing a set of priorities, the Town of Caledon can speak with one voice to these candidates to increase candidate knowledge and ultimately the priorities of the next Ontario government to support the needs of the Town,' the report stated.

The list suggested by staff included expectations that the next government will invest in broadband internet access for rural communities; support rural environments and the economy through value-added agriculture and similar supportive policies; help seniors stay in their communities by providing incentives for the private sector to build suitable and affordable housing; include rural communities in the GTA, including Caledon, in transportation planning; support climate change adaptation and mitigation; protect the interests of Caledon and rural areas in decisions related to regional governance; and to consider the impact of new or revised legislation on municipalities and small business.

The staff report stated the Progressive Conservatives have already released their platform, entitled People's Guarantee. It contains a focus on local recreation infrastructure, and increased funding for municipalities.

The Liberals and New Democrats have yet to release their platforms.

Shaughnessy thought a lot of good work went into the report, but she said it should deal with a broader picture.

She said there has been a lot of attention paid to the GTA's West Corridor, but there are other traffic issues beyond that, including extending the 427.

'It certainly is in our best interests,' she remarked, also stressing the need for advocacy regarding the Caledon village bypass and upgrades to Highway 9.

General Manager of Strategic Initiatives David Arbuckle said that according to his experience, the goal is to have a streamlined number of priorities. He added the transportation priorities provide several avenues to proceed, including the Corridor and commuter rail service. Other items can be discussed as things move forward.

He added the purpose here was not to make policy decisions, but to promote items Council has already taken a position on.

Shaughnessy countered council has passed motions on the bypass, and sent them to Peel Region.

She also noticed that staff was promoting cycling, which was fine with her.

'Cycling can't happen in Caledon village because of the road situation,' she pointed out.

Groves observed the community has been advocating to have Highway 427 extended to Highway 9 for some time. She agreed the road's not in Caledon, but the lack of the extension adds truck traffic to Highway 50, running through Bolton and Palgrave. She also pointed to the truck traffic heading to the Honda plant in Alliston, observing the road can't be widened in Bolton and Palgrave.

The road south of Bolton is at capacity, Groves remarked, adding a lot of Bolton residents use it to get to and from work.

'For them to get to work and home from work; it's crazy the amount of hours they've got to spend on the road,' she said.

Councillor Nick deBoer agreed about the need to extend the highway.

'It was the current government that actually stopped it,' he observed.