

Whether trucks or pits, it's all "the pits"

Ever curious, I recently did a Google search to see if there was an actual definition for "slippery slope."

According to that search (and the Oxford dictionary) indeed there is. Caledon, we are on one heck of a slippery slope. Defined as "an idea or course of action which will lead to something unacceptable, wrong, or disastrous," one has only to drive around our once green and beautiful town to see that trucks and pits have turned Caledon itself into "the pits." Potentially, it's about to get a whole lot worse.

In the past several weeks, and in the weeks to come, various proposals before Council include using an expired pit for infill, and using prime agricultural lands for truck parking lots. The first matter has already been discussed during a vocal and heated Council meeting that saw some Councillors asking hard questions, and a number of community delegates seeking honest answers. At the heart of the matter is a proposal that a former pit, located at 0 Shaws Creek Rd., be allowed to serve as a dump site for a "prominent developer." Said developer has a number of properties throughout the GTA, and is building homes in Caledon, too. They are looking to offload fill materials from these various sites. Understandably, a number of concerns have been raised by residents of Ward One who will be directly impacted, and by some members of Council acting on their behalf. That this matter may have originally passed without any opportunity for public consultation was one of the many concerns expressed by delegates, and by Councillor Dave Sheen, who called the situation "not acceptable."

Other concerns expressed include that the pit itself has already "naturally" rehabilitated itself and is 80% water. It's already home to wildlife, flora and fauna, and therefore any attempt at infill potentially runs the risk of contaminating local groundwater. This is already a concern in some parts of Ward One particularly with yet another pit (blasting quarry) proposed to begin operations nearby. Concerns about whether the

fill would be "clean" and how, or who, would be monitoring it were also shared. As well, it's anticipated that truck traffic will increase exponentially on already overloaded roads including Charleston Sideroad and Highway 10 with one delegate suggesting, conservatively, area residents could expect as many as 12 additional trucks per day, 24 hours a day over a period of the next five years. These would be full loaded dump trucks, often of the type that are paid by the load, and – should they be rushing as a result – these are the types of trucks that "on average take the length of two football fields to stop...if travelling at 80km/hr."

One has only to look at recent traffic accident history on highway #10 to know the additional risks such potential truck traffic poses on already dangerous roads.

Also frustrating, both Councillors Kiernan and Early, who represent Ward One, were not made aware of the coming potential change in zoning that would allow the pit to begin "accepting infill." They expressed serious concerns about the process, with Councillor Early calling how the matter came before Council a "slippery slope, that something of such magnitude was added to the agenda at the last minute and without consultation." Councillor Kiernan, attempting to express her concerns during one vehement exchange, reminded all present that Council has "to answer to the public and to do what's right for the Town of Caledon and for the residents of Ward One."

The matter has now been referred back to staff for a full report leaving many residents of Ward One to comment that they feel their community, between pits, infill, blasting quarries and dangerous roads, is "under siege."

Meanwhile, on the opposite side of Town, another ongoing issue of concern continues to rear its ugly head. With illegal truck yards popping up literally all over the place, an applicant (yet another developer) is seeking to rezone prime agricultural lands for use as a legal truck parking lot for the next three years. This matter

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comes before Council on June 17. The land in question is not only "prime agricultural," but also has a stream running through it, potentially resulting in a similar situation to that faced in Ward One, running the risk of contaminating groundwater (not to mention the potential for other significant types of environmental fall out.)

Meanwhile, this same developer has also applied to Vaughan Council for a similar ruling regarding lands located at Nashville Rd. and Highway 50.

The area is already a traffic nightmare and it's a location zoned as future residential. I'm left wondering: one, if we are in desperate need of housing (ideally affordable housing) why aren't we building homes NOW on land that is already zoned as residential and two, is Caledon Council (locked into a number of battles against illegal trucking yards) being asked to set a blueprint for the future by "approving" trucking yards by way of rezoning applications?

By the way, in an earlier letter to Caledon Council, the same developer referenced above has suggested they are interested in Caledon

lands for several reasons. Citing first, "given the lands location along Airport Road and the proximity to the new proposed Hwy 413," and next, that "Caledon is part of Ontario's largest logistics network due to its proximity to Canada's commercial airport (along with) multimodal railway networks combined with easy access to major road networks and its location at the centre of the GTA ..." making us I guess, in their opinion, an ideal place for "a number of new businesses [which] have started to emerge such as trucking depots, support activities for transportation and warehousing and storage."

So, it would seem that perhaps the writing is on the wall for Caledon and our once greenest town is indeed on a slippery slope, headed straight downhill towards a "bright" future as a freight village, dump zone and series of big rig parking lots, legal or otherwise. It's "unacceptable, wrong, [and] disastrous."

Welcome to Caledon, it's "the pits."

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