

Political debate breaks out at Town committee meeting

By **MELANIE HENNESSEY**
The Champion

What started as a public meeting regarding housing proposals turned into a lively debate on politics last week at Town Hall.

The discussion during the administration and planning committee meeting started with Farmstead Drive resident Ian Winsor raising concerns about the number of vehicles that will be added to local roads because of development. He cited worries regarding traffic on Derry Road and how the GO station is "very much full now."

Ward 4 Councillor John Challinor pointed out the various jurisdictions involved in the issues Mr. Winsor brought up, like the provincial and federal governments. He also reminded him of the elections coming up at those levels and said he should raise his concerns with those candidates.

Tremaine Road resident Walt Elliott, who's also a former MPP for the area, then got in on the action. While he came to the meeting to voice his thoughts about the proposed widening of Tremaine Road and the impact it could have on his home, he noted he thought Mr. Challinor's comment on elections was "completely inappropriate" for a public meeting, since he deemed it to be a political statement.

He said he also thought Mr.

Challinor was trying to point the finger of blame at other levels of government.

Mr. Challinor rebutted, first pointing out that Mr. Elliott used to be an MPP and then saying his comment, which the councillor also found to be political, is "a bit like the pot calling the kettle black."

While he emphasized the Town isn't receiving the funding it needs from the Province or federal government anymore, he said he isn't passing off the challenges the Town is facing due to growth.

He also said it's naive to think the Town of Milton solely controls its destiny.

He told *The Champion* in an interview Thursday he thinks "The Town's growth is being driven by federal immigration policy," and, "The Town's residential density model is being driven by provincial planning policy."

He noted the upgrades required on the Town's arterial roads, like Derry and Tremaine roads and James Snow Parkway, are driven by the Region's capital infrastructure investment priorities.

Back at Town Hall — once Mr. Challinor finished speaking, Mr. Elliott came back and said he stands by his original statement on the issue, pointing out he still thought it was inappropriate to "politicize" at a public meeting.

Mr. Challinor told him, "This is a political meeting — it's a democracy," but wasn't able to elaborate more before the meeting's chair, Ward 1 Councillor Brian Penman, curtailed the exchange.

Later on in the meeting, Mr. Penman said he thinks the Town has to take the Region's timelines for upgrading its roads in Milton and see if it can lobby to advance some of them.

"We have to be much more aggressive in our lobbying," he noted.

Milton Mayor Gord Krantz said he supported Mr. Penman's comments 110 per cent.

He noted that the Town has three votes on regional council — himself, Wards 1 and 3 Councillor Barry Lee and Wards 2 and 4 Councillor Ron Furik.

"And if anybody lobbies, it's me and the other (Milton) councillors," he said.

Mr. Krantz went on to say "so much for good timing and planning" when it comes to upgrading roads when the Town's partner, meaning the Region, isn't following its timelines.


As an example, he said Derry Road should've been upgraded two or three years ago, but it wasn't "because of politics" at the Region.

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