

CEAC Report 2005-02

Report to: Mayor and Members of Council

From: John Abbott, Chair, Caledon Environmental Advisory Committee (CEAC)

Prepared by EPAP Subgroup:
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Date: September 12, 2005

Subject: **CEAC Response to the Initial Release of the
Town of Caledon Environmental Progress Action Plan, dated June 2005**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Caledon Environmental Advisory Committee (CEAC) recommends to the Corporation of the Town of Caledon:

1. That Council receive CEAC report 2005-02.
2. That Council consider the recommendations in the report regarding enhancements to and effective implementation of the Town's Environmental Progress Action Plan (EPAP).
3. That the Environmental Progress Officer complete the implementation and monitoring section of the Plan as soon as possible, thus enabling this excellent initiative to move forward.

INTRODUCTION

CEAC congratulates Council on their vision and leadership in requesting the development and implementation of an Environmental Progress Action Plan (EPAP) for Caledon. Sara Peckford, the Town's Environmental Progress Officer, deserves praise for her outstanding work in researching and writing the first release of the EPAP. The format is excellent – clearly written with extensive background on each topic, action-oriented, grounded in real data, with local issues neatly integrated into the big picture. Ms. Peckford carried out extensive stakeholder consultation and has produced an initial plan that will help Caledon continue to move in the right direction.

CEAC would like to express its support for the EPAP and provide the attached comments and recommendations to Council in response. Some comments have been made on the Plan at an overview level, and other comments are made on specific sections of the Plan.

BACKGROUND

Earlier this year, the Town of Caledon requested that their Environmental Progress Officer, Sara Peckford, develop the first version of an Environmental Progress Action Plan for the Town of Caledon. Ms. Peckford carried out extensive research and consulted with numerous stakeholders, including a CEAC subgroup that was formed for the purpose. Ms. Peckford presented the initial release of the Plan to Council in June 2005. The CEAC EPAP sub-committee subsequently reviewed the document in detail and prepared the attached comments and recommendations.

REPORT OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this report are:

- To provide feedback on the initial release of the Town's Environmental Progress Action Plan, dated June 2005;
- To provide CEAC's comments and recommendations regarding the EPAP;
- To offer CEAC's assistance in implementing the Plan, by adding tasks for appropriate subgroups in the 2005-2006 CEAC Workplan.

DISCUSSION

Overview Comments and Recommendations

The June 2005 Town of Caledon Environmental Progress Action Plan is the first iteration of a living document. This release was intended to be a pragmatic, achievable, initial plan, and it has succeeded in that regard. However, it must be viewed as a first step that addresses only a subset of the issues facing Caledon and of the actions that can be taken. In addition, the EPAP is based on the information available at the time the Plan was written, but new and updated information is published every day. With these points in mind, the Town needs to plan for the EPAP to be updated on a regular basis, and for the Town's environmental priorities and actions to evolve over time. This activity will need to be included in the EPAP implementation plan.

In order to make the next release of the Plan more accessible to lay readers, it would be useful for each section to begin with a brief overview to set context and explain how the different subsections fit with the theme. As an example, in the Air Quality section, traffic volume isn't the issue; vehicle emissions are the problem. Urban forestry management isn't the issue; improving air quality is the goal.

CEAC recognizes that the Town may lack resources to implement the full Plan on schedule. When developing the annual CEAC workplan in October 2005, the sub-committees will review portions of the EPAP that are relevant to their work, looking for opportunities to partner with the Town in taking action. CEAC also recommends that Council use the Town-sponsored task force, COOL Caledon, as an additional resource, providing support to the committee as needed.

Comments and Recommendations by EPAP Report Section

Section 1 – Preface

In addition to the priorities listed, the following priorities need to be added to the list:

- **Water Quantity and Quality**
 - Although water supply, sewage and purification are under the Region’s jurisdiction, the Town of Caledon and its residents are involved in many aspects of the system, including water usage and plans for residential wastewater disposal.
 - The Town is also involved in protecting natural water sources, wetlands and watercourses.
- **Waste Management**
 - The Town of Caledon is at risk of being selected as a Regional landfill site, so waste reduction is a priority for Caledon.
 - The Town and its businesses and residents produce waste, and can take responsibility for waste reduction and increased recycling.
- **Sustainability** (more than just Sustainable Planning)
 - CEAC recommends that Council formally adopt a Sustainable Caledon initiative as one of the priority areas of the EPAP and direct resources to begin the process. While sustainability is much broader than the environment, it is appropriate that the EPAP act as the catalyst by first identifying it as an action item, working with community groups to identify potential champions, and providing staff resources to do background research on the many resources and opportunities available on sustainable communities. For instance, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities has emerged as the delivery agent for Sustainable Communities – the Canadian government’s response to the challenge of Agenda 21 (implementing sustainable development) ratified at the Rio Summit.

Section 2 – Air Quality

CEAC wants to emphasize the urgency of acting on this issue, in light of the high number of smog days in Caledon in 2005. Deteriorating air quality is a serious public health issue affecting residents of all ages, in addition to its major environmental effects. CEAC is working with the EPO on the Town’s Smog Response Strategy, and hopes to see it implemented shortly.

As a near-term action, Council can insist that GO Transit provide a realistic commuter bus route to Bolton, replacing the current route, which is highly unattractive to Bolton residents. Longer term, a GO Train station in Bolton is needed to reduce vehicle emissions along transportation corridors in Caledon.

Section 3 – Climate Change

The Town has invested considerable resources in the Town-appointed COOL Caledon task force, which developed several excellent programmes, held a successful energy show, partnered with local business, and created a valuable web site for Town residents. COOL Caledon has worked on many of the issues referenced in the EPAP, e.g. greenhouse gas emissions reduction, tree planting and energy conservation programmes. Earlier this year, COOL Caledon’s project director accepted a fulltime position and was unable to continue running the task force. Rather than

reinventing the wheel, CEAC recommends that the Town provide support to the task force to get COOL Caledon's work started again. This may include the provision of staff support, assigning new Councillors to the task force as needed, and appointing residents to replace any task force members who are unable to continue. The Town has made a significant investment in COOL Caledon and needs to ensure that it continues to succeed and, in doing so, helps the Town to achieve its goals.

Section 4 – Energy

The COOL Caledon Electricity Doctor programme is a good starting point for the energy audits recommended in the EPAP, and would be an excellent fit with the AMO Conservation Management Pilot, if Caledon is accepted. The Home Electricity Detective Kits in the local libraries are under-utilized as a conservation tool and could be better promoted.

Section 5 - Green Economy

More specifics need to be added to the Actions in this section. As an example, the Town needs to ensure that the Town continues to take actions to merit its "Greenest Town" designation. In order to retain the designation itself, additional actions would be required, e.g. checking with TVO regarding timing and requirements for 2005.

Prioritization guidelines for green procurement need to be developed, e.g. most potential for positive environmental impact, ease of implementation, relative costs.

The Town could work with local business organizations to develop the "Live Locally" campaign originally proposed by COOL Caledon as part of Caledon's climate change action plan. If residents work, buy products, socialize and enjoy recreation in Caledon, the local economy will benefit, residents will have a higher quality of life, and greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced. This campaign is a win for everyone in Caledon.

Section 6 - Environmental Awareness & Education

Residents are already bombarded by information from all directions, so they will respond better if communication comes to them through existing channels:

- For example, an Environmental Calendar of Events can be integrated with Town's overall Calendar, providing links to further information.
- Rather than writing a separate newsletter, use existing publications such as Caledon's newspapers, In The Hills and Sideroads magazine for the general public.
- Connect regularly with the network of environmental groups to reach the highly engaged stakeholders.

The language around "pesticide education" needs to be made more specific to clarify what is meant. For example, education can be provided to applicators or homeowners. It may cover the dangers of traditional pesticides or outline safer alternatives.

Section 9 - External Funding

The proposed Green Funds are a high priority. Caledon residents are highly engaged in environmental issues, but need resources to do their volunteer work. The needs range from minor administrative support to more significant grants.

The Town will benefit by actively seeking opportunities to partner with or outsource to local organizations, particularly on projects where non-governmental groups can obtain grants that are unavailable to municipalities. In many cases the groups need to demonstrate support from their local government in order to obtain funds, so both parties profit from the partnership.

Some of the long term strategies in the EPAP require funding beyond the Town's means, so an immediate focus on sourcing funds is important, particularly because of the time-consuming process for obtaining many grants. The preparation/approval process for grant applications within the Town needs to be streamlined to ensure that there are no delays at the Town's end. If there a Town policy/guideline about applying for Grants, it could be cited or included in the EPAP. Creating an EPAP information database could facilitate the preparation of grant applications. Easy access to current, accurate information, such as the material cited in the plan document, adds credibility to grant applications.

Section 10 – Implementation and Monitoring

The Plan is excellent, but implementation is everything, and monitoring the Plan to demonstrate progress is critical. This section of the EPAP has not yet been written, but it is so important that CEAC recommends that an updated version of the Plan, with this section added, be completed in the near future.

A streamlined, efficient monitoring system for the Plan is essential, but it must not be so onerous that it detracts from taking action. Council and staff have shown a commitment to 'staying on track' by measuring progress against the objectives of the Community Action Plan. This is a good model that needs to be incorporated as one of the tasks or priorities of the EPAP. Progress monitoring need not be cumbersome but instead can be simplified in such a way that it becomes a standard protocol and an integral part of any project. Clearly identifying the objective, related action, person responsible, resources required, time frame, status and barriers in a simple matrix represents a full cycle approach to the EPAP. In fact, Council could consider implementing this type of monitoring system for all departments within the Town.

The preparation of an Annual EPAP Report Card would be a useful monitoring and communication strategy, and this activity must be included in the implementation plan.

The implementation section would be strengthened by the inclusion of a thorough analysis of who will be responsible to implement the actions identified in the EPAP. Many of the actions will require interdepartmental coordination and implementation. Therefore CEAC recommends that an interdepartmental EPAP team be established whose mandate will be to ensure that the EPAP is implemented in the most efficient and expedient way.

Council needs to direct resources to the EPO to first identify in more practical terms how the EPAP will evolve, and how it will be kept current to reflect new baseline data, new initiatives,

progress reporting etc. Community workshops and consultations on EPAP's progress need to be scheduled and built into the implementation section.

Appendix F

The EPAP needs a strategy for dealing with feedback from consultations so everyone feels that their input has been considered and responded to, as appropriate.

CONCLUSIONS

The initial release of the Town of Caledon's Environmental Progress Action Plan is a positive and progressive step for the Town. It is imperative that the EPAP be completed in the near future to include details on implementation and monitoring, since that will form the heart of this excellent Plan. CEAC is prepared to assist in the EPAP implementation by adding tasks to the 2005-2006 Workplan for its relevant subgroups.