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For Shame

by SHERALYN ROMAN

As a proud Caledon citizen, I'm embarrassed.

The Prime Minister of our country shows up, in our little corner of the world, and is heckled, challenged and verbally abused to the point of his security team determining it was too much of a risk to his (and all attendees) personal safety to continue with a planned election rally. I don't care which side of the political debate you favour because debate is good. Hurling insults, foul language and threatening people is not. Period. With so many things to be proud of about Caledon and our many stellar residents, making the National news for hounding our Prime Minister out of town is just shameful.

It would be nice to say that these things are planned. That it was NOT the residents of Caledon who confronted Justin Trudeau last week but rather, an unruly group of bussed in paid protesters for hire.

Certainly it appears that at least a few of them were indeed visitors from other towns and cities including some who had been following Justin around for the entire day, heckling him at every stop. I think we know however, that it wasn't exclusively ?outsiders? and if we zoomed in close enough, some Caledon residents were part of the fracas. Certainly a few local PC party t-shirt wearing folks were.

Elections sometimes bring emotions to a boil and a pandemic election being conducted after more than 18 months of death, disruption, business closures and interruptions in both school and work and life, are bound to bring things to a tipping point. I'm pretty sure Mr. Trudeau (and all party leaders) can handle a protestor or two. But what is particularly galling, is that these folks preyed not just on Trudeau, but on anyone present who was wearing a mask, on children wearing masks (CHILDREN!) and that the level of vitriol and hatred escalated so alarmingly.

At the end of the day, whether you agree or disagree with the current governments pandemic policy, or with vaccines, or with wearing masks ? these are your neighbours. These are the children who attend school with your children. These are the folks who are simply doing all the same things you do, trying to make a living and support their families as best they can. That goes for everyone who was in attendance INCLUDING people in politics. We're all just human beings. Wouldn't it be nice if we treated one another that way, as people first and politicians second?

I've been quite clear I don't think now was a good time to hold an election. I also believe that in a free and democratic society such as ours, the right to protest and debate the issues is healthy. That doesn't mean engaging in an angry mob mentality scream-fest, endangering the health and safety of others, particularly when you choose to go without a mask while doing so. Going without a mask is also something I've talked about publicly. I believe we are being held hostage by anti-vaxxers and anti-maskers who continue to put us all at risk with their behaviour and I think we saw a lot of this last Friday too.

There are, of course, genuinely valid reasons why some folks cannot be vaccinated but I cannot think of a single reason why you would choose not to wear a mask. You wear a seatbelt while driving, you have a government issued passport that gives you permission to fly and most parents make sure kids are wearing a helmet while riding their bikes. You do these things because you know it's the safe thing to do, or the right thing to do or because they are the law, so you comply.

Stores post signs that say, ?No shirt, no shoes, no service,? so even when you're at the beach you throw on a shirt and your sandals to run in and purchase your snacks or coffee. What is so different about wearing a mask? It's just another little piece of cloth, in this case one that protects both YOU and those around you.

Did you get the flu last year? No? Neither did the massive majority of the public and I have to believe, wearing a mask while out in public played a large role in preventing flu germs from spreading. If it can stop flu in its tracks, it's probably pretty darn helpful in

preventing the spread of Covid too. Your ?right? to NOT wear a mask does NOT supersede the rights of our entire population who are just trying to stay healthy.

I could go on. We're fighting the wrong battles right now.

In some cases, we're fighting each other.

Why single out one small storeowner and repeatedly harass them? Why yell at children and say horrible things to a child about their parent's choice to help them stay safe by wearing a mask? Why spew hatred and violence filled threats against anyone? Racist slurs, obscenities, these demean us all and weaken any argument. By all means protest and/or debate. That's the hallmark of democracy. But what we saw last week was not healthy debate, nor even a peaceful protest. It was simply shameful. security of Canadians at risk. Canadians deserve better from their government.