

Divorce is never easy

by SHERALYN ROMAN

I'm sure we'll all agree this past week was a whirlwind for local politics. Faster than an episode of Fast and Furious, a news leak suggested an 'announcement' was imminent; one that would impact every single resident in Caledon, Brampton and Mississauga. Sure enough, before a collective breath could be drawn, Mayor Groves was summoned to a meeting where it was indeed formally announced, to paraphrase her own analogy, that her parents were divorcing. She hopes it's amicable? predictably, I have my doubts.

A regular reader will know that I have often said I could never be a politician. There are many, many reasons for that and one of them is I simply don't have the capacity, nor the interest, for the kind of political gamesmanship we have seen on display this past week.

Despite my Dad's best efforts I was never destined to be a chess master and I cannot even begin to fathom what Doug Ford hopes to gain by granting (or some might say demanding) this divorce. However, given that he's mandated significant growth for Caledon, could care less about our environment and hopes to pave a highway down the middle of our collective backyards, I have to think that somehow, this move works in his favour. No doubt if he feels Caledon is no longer answerable to the Region of Peel as an additional layer of government 'perhaps his own influence over our town will have more'well, influence.

As for Mississauga Mayor Bonnie Crombie, I can only comment, 'well-played Madam Mayor, well-played.' In an immaculate example of timing, she orchestrated the completion of a project started by former Mayor Hazel McCallion (whom we all know Mr. Ford admired greatly) and in legislation bearing the McCallion name, stood with a Cheshire grin on the stage as the announcement separating Mississauga from 'the rest of us' was made. I'm sure the timing, taking place just prior to a long weekend, was also intentional. Further, in true checkmate fashion, she waited a courteous 36 hours or so before announcing her intention (with a fully fleshed out website that must have been in the works for some time) to 'consider' a run for the leadership of the Ontario Liberal party. A formidable opponent Mr. Ford may have been hoping to placate, and thus distract from the leadership race, when he agreed to sign the divorce decree.

What is lost in all the discussions about who did what and why is the fact that both residents of Caledon and employees of the Region of Peel are those with the most to lose. Spare a thought for the Region's 4000+ employees who heard this announcement right before the first summer long weekend and rather than celebrating happily with family and friends may instead have spent it wondering about job security and future employment status. As for us residents, the conspiracy theories are mounting as to how this divorce might impact us. While Mayor Groves hopes, like her own divorce apparently was, that it is an amicable one with her ex taking out the trash for her, instead I foresee challenges. Who, for example, will now be responsible for taking out the trash in Caledon when it was previously a Regional responsibility, with Regional cost savings to boot? Who will absorb the increase in costs that are sure to follow now that we're taking out our own trash? The same goes for every other service that currently resides with the region and for which, as a result, we cumulatively enjoyed the economies of scale that resulted from that relationship.

Conspiracies, oops I mean 'conversations,' also immediately commenced about what this might mean for the borders of Caledon. Does life get easier for Doug Ford if everything south of Old School Rd. and/or his proposed Highway 413, now becomes a part of Brampton? In the past, the border between Brampton and Caledon has proven fluid, so a return to Brampton of anything south of Old School Rd is 'bound to happen,' according to some. As I said, I'm no chess master but when Caledon is already facing rising infrastructure costs, during a time of massive, provincially mandated growth, I don't think there's a scenario that sees us voluntarily giving up the many tax-paying subdivision developments popping up in Mayfield West II. That's part of the problem with divorce though, isn't it? Not much about it is voluntary.

If we are looking for partners to share in costs and efficiencies, having been forcefully separated from our neighbours to the south, does it make sense for us to align northwards with our friends in Orangeville and Dufferin County?

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