

A bed by any other name...

by SHERALYN ROMAN

In a not so surprising turn of events, the Ford government is up to their usual shenanigans again, putting a unique spin on yet another announcement, this time to do with housing. Much like every other announcement that seems to emanate from Queen's Park these days, the contents are dubious at best or what some might consider downright flagrantly inaccurate. A rose might still smell like a rose even if called by any other name but a bed? A bed is NOT, has never been and never will be a HOME.

I harken back to days of yore when a home was a home. You recall, I'm sure, in the pre-announcement days (mere days ago that is) when a home was somewhere that typically a family (of all shapes and sizes) gathered, all under a roof that also had at least four walls, and more than likely said home also had a kitchen, maybe a bathroom, perhaps even a living room of sorts, no matter how small. A home might be an apartment, a condo, a townhouse, semi-detached or a single-family dwelling ? or as is increasingly the case here in Caledon ? a enormous castle like structure with pillars and pot lights galore.

You know what is NOT a home? A bed. Particularly a bed in a long-term care facility, even a long-term care facility that might have once had an ?iron-ring? placed around it! Remember those days? One of Ford's early announcements during the pandemic when he claimed he'd look after our seniors by placing an iron-ring of protection around such facilities? I don't recall him referring to LTC beds as ?homes? at that time but now, suddenly, in the midst of an absolute housing crisis, a measly bed in a communal living space is somehow considered ?home.? Next up? No doubt Ford will be announcing ?Welcome Home? to all those who rely on a shelter bed in the middle of a snowstorm.

Calling a bed in an LTC facility is absurd and an affront to the dignity of those who often, through ill health or otherwise no fault of their own, must rely on a long-term care facility for their care and keeping. The towns and cities who used these statistics as part of their ?count? toward obtaining more government funding should be ashamed of themselves, as of course, should Ford be. By the way, if an LTC bed is indeed a ?home? and these ?homes? count in the numbers that result in some communities receiving huge payouts for ?meeting housing targets,? shouldn't there actually BE enough beds (oops, I mean homes) for all those that require them?

Asking for a friend.

I think we might all agree that we are indeed in the middle of a housing crisis. That young adults today, with good incomes pooled together, are still unable to purchase an affordable home is a problem. The problem is fuelled by developers who insist on building massive properties on tiny lots at ridiculous prices. It's fuelled by our inability to think outside of the box and take advantage of infill spaces; build affordable housing that is actually affordable, or control the volume of investors who buy up condos for the sole purposes of either reselling at a massive markup or making money on the unit as an AirBnB instead of increasing the housing supply.

The problem is exacerbated by lengthy permits and approvals processes, and by Ford's downloading of the costs of development onto towns and cities while simultaneously prohibiting them from collecting developer fees. Even the apparent refusal to look at our past as a lens to guide future planning prohibits progress on the housing crisis. In the post-war boom of the 1950s and 60s, ?catalogues? of home designs, with universal building standards, were made available to builders and the permits and approvals process was streamlined to encourage new builds ? at an affordable price. ?Cookie-cutter? homes are already plentiful in many a neighbourhood so using history as our teacher, why not make them easier to build and more affordable while you're at it?

While our current housing crisis is such that often a single-family dwelling might have a rental unit contained within it, or many young adults might still be living with their parents, two things remain true: affordable housing alternatives DO exist but there are insufficient incentives to build them despite Ford's promise of millions of dollars, and a bed is a bed is a bed, especially one in a long-term care facility. It will only ever be a bed, nothing more and certainly not ever a home.