

A day in the life of Caledon

by SHERALYN ROMAN

Birds, highways, pits, and a day in court. What else is new for Caledon? Our town is changing minute by minute and it can be hard to keep up. Resident advocacy groups like Democracy Caledon can help, as do a myriad of other organizations linked to calling attention to developer overreach, the environment (Forks of the Credit Preservation Group and Caledon Swan Lake), trucking and safety issues (the Caledon Community Road Safety Advocacy Group), and others.

Who doesn't keep up? The Town of Caledon and its messaging.

'Read the room?' is an expression representing one's ability to understand the audience to whom they are playing. The Town of Caledon appears to have lost that ability. Residents are struggling under the weight of rising costs of food and gas, trying to get to work on unsafe roads surrounded by trucks, and have genuine concerns about the potential for rising tax rates related to massive, and seemingly unrestrained development. In the midst of all this, recent exhortations about how the Town is protecting birds and bragging about proximity to trade corridors and growth potential are being received by the public as completely tone deaf.

Considering the Town seems pretty intent on allowing developers, gravel pit owners and Doug Ford and his Highway 413 free reign over Caledon, the messaging from the Town portrays a false sense of reality.

Here are just two examples.

Recently, the Town boasted about birds, for the second time I might add, announcing Caledon has been 'certified as a Bird friendly City by Nature Canada' and recognized for its 'leadership in bird conservation, habitat protection, and community engagement.' I'm not entirely sure how massive land rezoning, highway construction and a blasting quarry are exactly bird friendly, but according to the Town's own messaging, staff were 'directed to apply for Bird Friendly City status.' In doing so, the Town committed to such initiatives as implementing bird-friendly building design, 'dark-sky lighting measures to reduce light pollution?' and, I kid you not, 'animal control by-laws that limit free roaming cats.' I note nothing specific however, about whether filling in Swan Lake might disrupt the habitat and home of a multitude of species 'including Trumpeter Swans, which, last I checked, I'm pretty certain are BIRDS!

In the second announcement, the Town proclaims 'Ontario is Caledon.' Not content to just be a Town, I guess we are now all of Ontario wrapped up into one, tidy set of 12 legally contested zoning approvals. The messaging brags that Caledon is 'set to become one of the fastest - growing municipalities in Ontario (and) secured \$14M of federal accelerator funding to support the supply of more housing.' Nothing about affordability was mentioned, but it did go on to note that 'located along major GTA trade corridors with connectivity through the future Highway 413' makes us an ideal location for businesses looking to relocate. The accompanying graphics and photos included a beautiful park and homes located next to a pristine-looking body of water. Not pictured? Any of the hundreds of illegal truck, trailer and storage container yards currently dotting the landscape as applications for truck and trailer parking continue unabated and 'zoning into compliance' has become just another sentence in the Caledon dictionary.

Meanwhile yet another application is coming before Council on June 2, this one concerning a sand and gravel aggregate extraction facility who want to expand an existing site by having land rezoned from Prime Agricultural to Extractive Industrial. About the only 'positive' thing we can say about the applicant Amrize, formerly LaFarge (and, of course, I'm being ironic) is that at least it's not a blasting below the water table proposal.

Finally, we'll end by noting that Democracy Caledon recently had their day in court.

On May 4, the force was with the citizen-led group who are challenging the legality of a series of 12 land rezoning applications, pushed through in part via the use of provincially granted Strong Mayor powers. At issue are a number of concerns including the

speed with which the rezoning took place, the lack of any secondary plans, how infrastructure like water and sewers and roads would be developed and paid for and by whom? (Resident tax dollars?) As well, did this rezoning violate municipal planning processes and both the Town and the Region of Peel's Official Plan? Judgement has been reserved for announcement at a future date, but could have a significant impact not just on Caledon, but all of Ontario, which - according to the Town - is Caledon.

Tone deaf indeed.