

A few good people

by SHERALYN ROMAN

We are rapidly approaching an important date in the municipal calendar. Perhaps you've already noticed, even subconsciously, the 'ramping up' of certain websites, social media pages and 'election adjacent' appearances by both current and aspiring politicians. This is your friendly reminder that we are about to head into what I've previously called 'silly-season' during past election years. That said, this year, the stakes could not be higher and there's nothing 'silly' about it. The writ drops May 1, and Caledon, we need a few good people to step up.

To say Caledon is at a crossroads is an understatement. After an announcement by the Prime Minister and Premier Ford to 'accelerate new housing construction' by cutting municipal development charges by up to 50%, last Thursday, the Town of Caledon had a press release prepared and posted by 6:12 pm that same day. In it, Mayor Groves is quoted as follows: 'Today's announcement is a major step forward in tackling the housing crisis and Caledon is ready.' Further, the release referred favourably to what many consider problematic MZOs from 2024, by saying, 'Council's decision' to proactively rezone lands for nearly 35,000 homes, (was) the foresight needed to meet the demands of a growing community.' Call me jaded, but somehow it feels a bit like boasting (and also just wrong) to suggest that using MZOs to force through land zoning decisions was having 'foresight.'

To this observer, the fact that another zoning decision, that came before Council April 7 (so, by the time you read this, the decision will have been made) to rezone as 'Future Development' an additional estimated 9,000 acres largely surrounding those previously MZO zoned properties, should also give you pause. No doubt, that pause will be followed by the dawning realization of the extent to which Caledon will change over the coming years. That's where a few good people come in. You're needed now, more than ever before, to help protect what's left of Caledon's environment, agriculture, protected greenbelt, wetlands, and waterways, not to mention heritage.

Most of us recognize that change is inevitable and that growth is not necessarily inherently bad. But only growth that is managed. Growth that includes appropriate development of infrastructure like schools, roads, recreation and parks. Growth that ensures environmental, greenbelt and similarly protected lands and water systems are not plowed under, or blown up in the process, and growth that does not include Caledon becoming a dump zone for everyone else's construction fill, including whatever all this home-building right here in Caledon will contribute.

Caledon cannot continue to be considered a never-ending source for the raw materials deemed necessary for growth by allowing for a mega-blasting quarry to become a reality. For the record, 'deemed necessary' is only according to the company that will make millions from such a quarry, and is not supported by the studies that suggest we already have enough raw materials for at least the next 30-40 years. In other words, we need a few good people who recognize that the fate of Caledon over these next two terms of Council is hanging by a thread and who are ready, willing and able not only to step into the fray of municipal governance, but also to potentially stand up to developer interests. Are you one of them?

People who care about the environment. People who are knowledgeable about Council, who have perhaps attended a Council meeting or two (or 32 or 42), people who may have the time, resources and willpower necessary to campaign and who are willing to take a stand to protect Caledon and/or their constituents. These are the kinds of people Caledon needs right now. The current Council has, I think it's fair to say, been somewhat divided. We've talked about the seemingly consistent 5-4 vote split amongst members. Ideologically, it's a challenging time for people who genuinely want to work for the good of Caledon and to protect and preserve at least some of what's left of our community, once known as 'the Greenest Town in Ontario.' Are you perhaps one of those folks who might be up for that challenge?

If any of this sounds like you, registering as a municipal candidate begins May 1, 2025. You must be a Canadian Citizen and the minimum age of 18, a resident of the Town of Caledon or you and your spouse own or rent property here. Registration to run continues through until August 21, 2026, at 2 p.m., so you have lots of time to think this over. We won't know until at least the

middle of April whether there will also be school trustee positions to vote for (talk about cutting it close, Premier Ford) but given the strong likelihood that some of the people who run for such positions are probably also interested in having a voice in the democratic process generally, there might certainly be some crossover into municipal politics if trustee positions are eliminated. For the record, that's a whole separate column and it's appalling that Peel Region's 235,000+ students (and families) in both the public and catholic school boards have no voice or representation right now.

On the fence but want to learn more? The Caledon Public Library is hosting a series of information sessions on running in an election campaign. A series of drop-in sessions at local branches, they are intended to provide prospective candidates with the information they need to understand the process and requirements to run. There will also be a virtual session offered and no registration is required.

People who care, people with a conscience, we need you. Municipal governance is at a crossroads. Premier Ford is even taking another swipe at democracy by making further changes at the Regional level too, by removing elected regional chairs and replacing them with appointees who will have Strong Chair powers similar to Strong Mayor powers.

Under the Better Regional Governance Act, Eight of the province's biggest regional governments in Ontario will have their leaders directly appointed by the province, a move designed to ensure more efficient, streamlined regional decision making. In other words, the erosion of democracy continues and if you want to play a role in an attempt to preserve and protect it, talk to your family, friends, the people in the community, ward, village or hamlet you live in.

It's time to make an important decision about your future - and Caledon's. Thank you to those of you even considering the challenge.