

Caledon at the Crossroads

by SHERALYN ROMAN

Caledon is at a crossroads. Long uniquely positioned geographically as a special place that represents the best of both urban and rural, with pretty little towns and hamlets, larger urban areas and everything in between, today we're at a larger, less pretty and more threatening crossroads. At a time when we face significant population growth, our voice at the Regional table is being taken away. At a time when taking action on climate change and environmental protections are more important than ever, a new highway rapidly approaches. We're at a crossroads and this one isn't nearly as pretty as our special, unique geographic location.

The issue of our 'voice at the table' surfaced several weeks ago with a surprise move by Brampton Mayor Patrick Brown to realign the distribution of seats at the Regional level, adding to Brampton's count at the expense of Caledon.

The fact that a Caledon councillor supported this sudden move was even more surprising.

With Mayfield West rapidly expanding and population growth provincially mandated, now is not the time to reduce our regional presence.

According to our own Mayor Thompson, Caledon has a planned growth of over 300% over the next 30 years and we need our 5 seats at the table to ensure WE are the ones 'moving Caledon's interests forward (in) planning.'

Residents, the meeting to address this issue takes place online December 17 and it's imperative we attend. If you're concerned about the democratic concept of representation, show up and stand up for Caledon

In other news, this past weekend saw the resignation of David Crombie, Chair of the Greenbelt Council, over the issue of Bill 229 (and specifically, Schedule 6) running roughshod over environmental protections.

If you think Caledon is located at the pretty little intersection of urban and rural it's because we have a number of geographically important watersheds and environmentally protected lands, much of which are now potentially under threat from the passage of this Bill. Of further concern, with the resurrection of plans for a 400 series highway to run smack dab through the middle of Caledon (and the rapidly expanding community of Mayfield West) we have much to be worried about.

Potentially relieving truck traffic on Highway 10, Mayfield Road, and through the Bolton corridor isn't necessarily a bad thing but when it comes at the expense of our environment, perhaps it actually is. We have maintained the balance of urban and rural somewhat successfully for many years; now is not the time to allow provincial governments, or our neighbours to the south, to influence our growth, our environment and our now precarious position at the crossroads.

The issue is so problematic that as I sat writing this column, breaking news announced a further show of support for Mr Crombie.

As a result of serious concerns about changes to the role and mandate of conservation authorities, six further members of the Greenbelt Council resigned. David Crombie, a former PC MP and Toronto Mayor, called the proposed changes in Schedule 6 'a high-level bombing' that 'needs to be resisted.' The Bill threatens the effectiveness of watershed planning and management and 'grossly expands' the use of Ministerial Zoning Orders, crippling, he states, 'Conservation Authorities in the pursuit of their historic stewardship of environmental issues.'

The six fellow members echoed his words. Sadly, as some folks living in Downtown Bolton know only too well, it's clear the damage caused when Mother Nature rears her ugly head is significant. The potential for long lasting, even permanent, damage to the environment (and to homes and families and businesses) cannot be ignored.

Caledon is indeed at a crossroads. It's imperative that as residents we speak up to share our concerns over where and how development happens, the potential impacts of building highway 413, the loss of our voice at the regional table and the long-term ramifications to this beautiful crossroads we call home. Caledon ? we need to protect both our environment and our ability to decide our own future so that we remain ?the pretty little intersection of urban and rural? and not just a bypass on the road to disaster.