

Engaged?

by SHERALYN ROMAN

The title for this column might be misleading, perhaps causing you to think about a marriage proposal. It's not the recently engaged that I'm interested in speaking about today, despite having a son who is engaged and about to get married. Rather, it's a question I'm posing to you faithful readers, and in turn asking you to pose it to others. Are you engaged? Are you actively learning about, concerned about, or getting involved in what's happening in and around our community? Because if you're not, I'm begging you - please get engaged!

As I have been out and about in the community, one thing has become increasingly clear; there are plenty of people who don't seem to know an awful lot about what's happening in Caledon, or perhaps more specifically, what the potential impact on all Caledon residents might be. Rooms that should be full, with residents of all ages concerned about the environment are well-attended, yes, but they should be packed to the rafters. Protests are happening and thank you to those who show up waving placards but there should be more! Community conversations and Council meetings about MZOs drew some of the largest crowds we've seen in a while, but in a Town with over 80,000 residents and with proposed housing impacting wards throughout Caledon, again I posit ? why aren't more people showing up to voice their concerns?

It's easy to complain on social media, but quite another to take the time to show up, to write a letter or to stand on the side of the road in protest. I get it - my own schedule precluded me from taking part in an event last weekend that was important to me. But, generally speaking, I think the problem is deeper than just a scheduling conflict. Perhaps I'm allowing my naivete to show but while I applaud those who protest, speak up and get involved for the sake of the greater good, whether that's for our future climate, community well-being, road safety or development, I believe most of the rest of us only step up when we perceive something will have an impact on us directly. So, the bigger question is how to ensure that the maximum number of residents don't just know about what's going on in Caledon but are willing to engage, to actively get involved?

Perhaps it's as simple as hitting the streets. During one recent event, a booth was set up to educate the general public on the impacts of the proposed 413 highway. As I listened in, person after person expressed surprise and concern after learning even just a little about the devastating impact of what I will always refer to as ?the highway to nowhere.? Many expressed a desire to learn more and do more after hearing the facts, but such initiative needs to be felt throughout the region as sadly there are still so many who have simply bought Ford's ?save 30 minutes on your commute? story hook, line and sinker, never stopping to question how, or when, or at what cost?

After attending another event, concerning the proposed blasting mega-quarry, I became aware that some people think such a quarry will be ?good for business,? citing the economic development of Caledon as a good enough reason to blast away huge swaths of land. Not knowing that such a plan will ruin the water table for residents who have called Caledon home for generations and risk the entire Credit River watershed, a number of species and their habitat (many of these impacts similar to those of developing the 413) all while destroying farmland and felling more than 60,000 trees isn't acceptable. So, capitalizing on the power of social media, the Forks of the Credit Preservation Group recently created a ?Heart of the Headwaters? Passport that guides residents through six different stops in the area, highlighting the various impacts of a mega-quarry at each stop. Completing the tour will take you through some of the prettiest areas (and close to local businesses) that Caledon has to offer and will allow you, at each stop, to enter into a draw and to send your concerns easily (through a QR code) to MPP Sylvia Jones. Go for a drive this weekend. Take the kids for ice cream or pizza at the Gather Cafe, or stop for a beverage at GoodLot. While enjoying all that Caledon has to offer, take care to dodge the gravel trucks (which will only increase exponentially) and make the most of the scenery while you still can because this quarry won't just impact locals, but all Caledon residents and not in a way that's ?good for business.?

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