

From 'Greenest' Town to Truck Town

by SHERALYN ROMAN

Caledon, once voted the Greenest Town in Ontario, is rapidly devolving into truck town - a place not unlike the wild, wild west of the 1800s where people ventured out on to the frontier, claiming land as they saw fit and paying little mind to the law as they did so. With over 700 square kilometres of what was once prime farmland being rapidly paved over, infilled with potentially toxic waste, or zoned for a completely unnecessary highway, and our own municipal government staggering under the weight of trying to keep up with law breakers without any provincial support, law abiding citizens would be forgiven for thinking this town has 'gone to the trucks.' Inroads are being made (pun intended) but I think we're in for the long haul (yeah, that one too) before we see meaningful change.

It's not all negative though. Positive action is happening across Caledon, but most specifically in Bolton with the hard work of the Caledon Community Road Safety Advocacy Group, a coalition of residents whose movement seems to be gaining traction (let's face it, there's a lot of pavement-related puns) not just in Caledon but at the Region of Peel, in Vaughan and the surrounding area. This group has been invited to return to the table where they've already delegated once, to speak with representatives from the Region of Peel. That's a good sign, and since their inception, we have seen a marked increase in MTO and OPP Blitzes on major roadways like hwy#50 and hwy#10, resulting in unsafe vehicles and improperly licensed drivers being taken off the road.

The CCRSA are not the only ones expressing concerns about traffic, truck safety and illegal trucking yards. The battle continues in Alton and Caledon Village where the potential for a blasting quarry will add thousands of trucks onto local roads ill equipped and/or entirely unsuitable to deal with them. I respectfully suggest that each of the various groups fighting change must take note of the others to ensure that their cumulative voice is heard and that maximum impact for change on ALL of our local roads is made possible. Working in silos, on specific issues makes sense in terms of providing true local impact stories, but let's face it, this trucking and traffic issue impacts every Caledon resident (and frankly, communities well beyond our borders too) whether the root cause is increased quarry activity, increased freight traffic as a result of rampant consumerism, or poor controls over licensing and driver testing.

In more good news, ongoing protests outside of illegal trucking yards are happening frequently and it appears even the Trucking Associations are becoming more vocal in their request for regulations around licensing and training for drivers. Keep making noise, Caledon - local officials are hearing you, even if our provincial government representatives have remained remarkably mute on the subject. In fact, their radio silence is deafening. And disappointing. For those interested in helping draw our MPPs attention to the issue, a protest is being organized outside their office in downtown Orangeville tomorrow, Friday, November 22, at noon.

Related to truck and traffic safety, we've also noted some small but significant steps forward in the battle against Highway 413, as alluded to last week in this space. Councillor Doug Maskell was successful in a motion he put before council to 'clearly state, to the residents of Caledon and to the Province, that it (Council) does not support the construction of Highway 413 as outlined in the legislation contained in Bill 212.' Raising grave concerns about due process, removing people's right to appeal, the right to use of force when it comes to land expropriation AND concerned about the significant environmental impacts of this potential highway, he asked for - and received - the support of council in a unanimous vote.

In an email from HeadwatersStopsThe#413, Caledon Council was thanked for 'taking a stand against this anti-democratic legislation,' and the Mississauga's of the Credit First Nation have expressed concern that the Bill allows accelerated 'early works' to take place without consultation and at great risk of harming wildlife and fish habitats. These are each positive, if incremental, steps forward in an attempt to prevent Caledon from becoming nothing but a parking lot for trucks and/or a community that said trucks simply barrel through at breakneck speeds.

Change is inevitable, we all understand that on some level, but I am heartened by those who refuse to be steamrolled under (yeah, I know, I couldn't resist) by so-called progress. I have great respect for those citizens who are protesting, organizing, delegating and

who are driven (enough puns already!) to succeed in the fight against illegal trucking, dangerous roads and the entirely dubious 'need' for a stretch of highway running just 52 km east/west when another, stretching over 150 km and running in the same direction exists just a few miles south of us.

Without any apparent support from our provincial representatives, local residents, and our Mayor and Council, are taking a stand not against progress, but process. They are asking for support to fight against Caledon's slow and steady decimation from the 'greenest' town in Ontario to one where in the words of a song, they've 'paved paradise and put up a parking lot,' many of them, and often illegal ones at that.