

## Impact? Too soon to tell

by SHERALYN ROMAN

For residents of Ward 1, and specifically Alton, a very busy few days has come to an end. After months (probably years) of planning, the RBC Canadian Open has come and gone and the impact on this quaint little village that played host? It's probably a bit too soon to tell.

Perhaps you heard about the big event or even watched some on TV? Maybe you were lucky enough to attend, and not get stuck in traffic! TPC Osprey Valley, located in Alton, was the centre of all the RBC Canadian Open action this past weekend, and with promises of an economic boom for the community, for Caledon, and for the surrounding area, local businesses were hopeful.

Residents of Ward 1 are probably glad to see these very busy few days come to an end but I'm not exactly sure how our small business owners might be feeling. That's because many of them made plans for extra staff, ordered in extra food and beverage supplies, and in some cases even made physical alterations to their locations. This was all in an effort to ensure they could cope with, and serve, in true Caledon style, the anticipated hoards of people. It seems that a few of those businesses at least, didn't end up seeing them.

Residents of the area were given the option of a free pass to tour the facilities before they opened. I was able to attend and the undertaking appeared to be well-organized and massive. One thing was evident, that a vast array of food and beverage choices would be made available to spectators, within the compound of the golf event itself. While that's no real surprise, some of the vendors included The Keg and Burger's Priest (hardly local) AND with parking lots located as far away as the Brampton Fairgrounds, and spectators shuttled by bus to the event, perhaps it's no surprise to anyone that potential customers for local businesses simply didn't materialize. I would imagine after a long, hot day watching golf and with no immediate access to one's car, after being ferried back to their vehicles via shuttle most people simply headed home. To make matters worse, it seems like even some locals stayed away, sensing businesses would be overrun with spectators. Economic boom? Only time will tell.

One assumes in an effort to ensure things go smoothly next year, there will be a significant debrief about what worked well and what didn't. On the aforementioned tour, we ended up having to evacuate due to an impending storm. Kudos to all the staff and volunteers who, given the enormous volume of people present, emptied the course safely and quickly. Luckily nothing happened during the event itself, but at least one part of the planning appeared to work well. Impact? Planning works, but luckily wasn't needed.

As for traffic and illegally parked cars? It seems no one got hurt but sure, there was some damage and aggravation. Bylaw was out in full force tagging and towing vehicles, but area residents were given special passes to avoid any issues. Traffic was bad on the first day as we understand the weather played a role in making some of the planned parking lots into swamps instead. To be fair though, while I'm not sure the estimated 125,000 attendees all turned up, other than Main St. north and south heading in and out of the golf course, traffic wasn't really all that horrific. All one had to do was plan accordingly by allowing a little extra time, or by taking an alternate route, and residents weren't impacted as much as might have been expected.

That said, it was interesting to read the complaints on social media about how 'surprised' some folks were about what was happening around town. Apparently all the many different kinds of signage posted throughout not only Alton, but the surrounding area, not to mention media coverage and notices from the Town of Caledon to local residents wasn't enough! In terms of impact, score one for Caledon for mostly good planning, as long as we ensure we take heed of the lessons learned this year and change up some of the parking locations for next year. Also, Caledon OPP may I respectfully suggest you don't just rely on parked cruisers with lights flashing to control traffic and instead occasionally step out and help direct the traffic.

Some local residents, including members of the Forks of the Credit Preservation Group, took to the side of the road with protest signage, calling attention to the significant risks to local wells and their water supply (not to mention to the Credit River) brought about by the proposed plan to pump groundwater from a proposed quarry site, to the TPC Osprey Valley course. From there, the

dirty groundwater could end up in the Credit River system ?endangering local drinking water and one of Southern Ontario's last remaining Brook trout populations.?

Why protest during the Canadian Open? TPC Osprey Valley is owned by Chris Humeniuk, who has also leased some of the land of the proposed quarry site to CBM Aggregates, a subsidiary of the Brazilian conglomerate Votorantim Cimentos who would be mining the quarry if its approved. Like the comment about economic impact, it's too soon to tell if the ensuing media coverage the small group of protestors attracted will have a long-term positive impact on any decisions made about the quarry or the use of the pumped groundwater.

One unintended consequence that WAS of significant impact? For the entire duration of June 2 through 8, the road signage about the event seems to have led to significantly fewer (as in next to nil) 18-wheelers trucking up and down Main St. Alton putting young lives at risk as they pass within just a few yards of the local elementary school. That just goes to show there ARE alternative routes available because apparently the trucks were using them. Let's hope the long-term impact of this is the removal of the ?Strategic Goods Movement Network? label from Main St. Alton, eliminating truck traffic from this small village where it has no business travelling in the first place

Finally, I'll try not to always be so cynical and end on a high note. Was it fun throughout the event to listen to the roar of the crowds and to hear the music from Friday and Saturday nights entertainment? For sure. And was it exciting to know that this world class event was being held right here in our own little corner of Caledon? Absolutely. Have we already heard some great suggestions for how to improve things next year? Yes indeed, including this one which potentially not only would generate an economic impact during the event, but for long after as well: If there is a continued reliance on shuttle services to move spectators to and from the golf course, perhaps the Town of Caledon could operate some of those shuttles (or add in others) as ?TourCaledon? busses, taking visitors for a spin around the area and maybe even scheduling stops at the local businesses who were supposed to feel the economic impact first hand. I'm only speaking personally of course, and I do think the event was mostly well done and well planned, but I question the promised economic boom to our local economy and small businesses. That I am not so sure about. Perhaps it's too soon to tell.