

It was the Best of Times. It was the Worst of Times.

by SHERALYN ROMAN

In a similar theme to last week and with apologies to Dickens, 2020 might best be summarized succinctly by quoting the title of this article.

We've seen people at the end of their rope and people who have not only extended the rope to help others hang on but also provide them with a soft place to land. Politicians who have done the right thing and politicians who have done the worst thing and finally, charities who have supported many more than usual, while recouping little in terms of fundraising dollars either because people have nothing left to give or just don't seem to want to. Last week, myself hanging on to that rope by the thinnest of margins and ready to throw in the towel, my faith in humanity was restored by the kind act of a tow truck driver. Suddenly it seemed, and just in time, the spirit of the season was back. With December now upon us and both a full lockdown and the 'holiday season' in full swing ? is this the best of times or worst of times for you?

Locally, I was encouraged by a community, who combined with one Mom in her dogged pursuit of the opportunity to provide a 'Hallmark moment' for her neighbourhood. Despite obstacle after obstacle, a Santa Claus parade was organized for parents and children (and some of us adults too) to watch from the safety of our own homes. Together with volunteer fire fighters, the happiest Santa we've seen in a long while and sponsored by a local real estate agent with a big heart, this event was a big hit for families who won't be able to watch the annual Bolton Santa Claus Drive By this year. In true Hallmark fashion, it was an even bigger hit for The Exchange as several other wonderful community minded folks offered their vehicles and front porches as safe drop off points for food donations, collecting a whopping amount of food over the course of the parade. It was a win-win situation for everyone and a shining example of the real meaning behind 'holiday spirit.'

On the flipside, last week also saw the betrayal of the best interests of our entire Caledon community; the ramifications of which will likely be felt long after any holiday spirit has departed. A vote took place at the Region of Peel; a vote that saw Caledon's representation at that Regional table, reduced significantly. This comes just as our little portion of Peel is set to grow significantly over the next thirty years and at a time when regional representation has probably never been so important.

Caledon's population is projected to double by 2040 and double again by 2050. We're growing across the region, from Mayfield West to Caledon East and already form more than 50% of the landmass that comprises Peel Region. I would think now, more than ever before, is not the time to take away from our seat at the Regional table. If you are not already familiar with it, the issue of regional representation is large, complicated and far too unwieldy to delve into here. It requires careful review and consideration. What can be said is that the issue is contentious and requires a unified front by our Caledon Council members who are charged with representing the best interests of our entire community.

Voted in to represent us, most of Council did indeed step up to the plate. Betrayal always hurts but to say it's disappointing for one Caledon council member to vote against their peers, on a decision as potentially far reaching as this one, is one heck of an understatement. As Mayor Thompson suggests, with our community growing, we 'deserve our voice on Regional Council to get stronger not weaker.' Not presenting a unified front in front of the Region doesn't help.

In another repeat of last week's column (because you have about 20 days of shopping time left so I figured a reminder couldn't hurt) the good news is we've seen a significant upswing in the #LoveLocal and #SupportLocal movement.

Town Council, residents and social media are promoting and supporting local business with a renewed emphasis and sense of purpose, recognizing these are the folks who in turn support us. The bad news is, nothing has changed at a provincial level and why big box stores can remain open and small retailers can't, continues to defy logic. Let's hope, in the spirit of the holidays, that #ShopLocal isn't too little too late.

Finally, I might just add that while I am not one to promote flouting the law, when it comes to doing so there are two types of folks. You have the 'meat guy' in Toronto and then, more local to Bolton, a 'protest' of sorts by a gentleman just trying to make a living. Opening a small retail location, but doing so safely and without protests, anti-maskers and other related zealots, who were kicking up quite a fuss, is a different kind of rule breaking than what we saw in Toronto.

May I respectfully suggest that perhaps 'meat guy' donates some of his undeserved hundreds of thousands in GoFundMe dollars to support other small retailers in the event they find themselves fined? Even better, donate all that money to the charities currently working double time to support triple the need.

A gal can dream right? Meantime, looks like I'm heading back into the 'worst of times' territory. I might need another 'lift' (of the holiday spirits that is) from a benevolent tow truck driver.