

It's that time of year

by SHERALYN ROMAN

Several locations throughout Caledon, including Town Hall, in Alton and in Bolton, were recently the recipients of crosswalk makeovers. It was a timely, and largely citizen-led initiative to honour our veterans.

These crosswalks and light standards have been painted in remembrance of the service and sacrifices made to preserve our freedom. This includes: the freedom to enjoy our democratic way of life, to love who we love, to participate in how we are governed, and to move about this great nation without restriction. Yes, it's that time of year again, and increasingly it seems, we must use November 11 as an opportunity to remind ourselves of all that was fought for, by whom, and all that is at risk if we fail to remember them.

Canada is a great nation. Now, much more so than in recent years, we have once again embraced patriotism, with expressions like 'Elbows Up' and 'Buy Canadian' becoming a mantra of sorts.

These are good things. Yet, in other ways, we are passively watching the slow erosion of some of the basic principles of democracy.

We see it here in Caledon and other municipalities with how Strong Mayor powers are being used, and as we watch environmental concerns being swept aside in the rush to build, fill and dump.

We see it provincially as our Premier (and others, including Alberta's Danielle Smith) use the Notwithstanding Clause to run roughshod over our rights; such as the right to strike, or to hear and participate in debate on important issues in the legislature that instead are given first, second and final readings with little or no input.

Our Prime Minister talks of 'nation-building,' and it's promising to listen to our potential as he describes it, but will the very style of democracy we espouse also be our downfall if the budget of November 4 causes a snap election?

These are not just existential threats, they are happening now.

In Caledon, in the rush to build homes faster (but not necessarily more affordably) we're building a highway through portions of environmentally sensitive land and we might soon be filling in lakes with construction debris, potentially destroying our drinking water sources in Ward One.

Our neighbours to the west in Erin are quietly seeking to dump effluent (sewage) into the West Credit River even though the required effluent cooling system has not yet been installed. In short, a lot of unilateral moves are being made by politicians around the country, all in the name of progress. I'm just not sure it's the kind of progress our veterans fought so fiercely to protect.

Most concerning of all, here and around the world, we are seeing a rise in authoritarianism, extreme conservatism, Christian nationalism, racism and more. We'd be naive to think Canada is immune to the rise in 'isms,' and have only to take a peek at social media, or take a drive through Shelburne on a Saturday morning, to see how entrenched the 'isms' are.

It's easy to dismiss and yet, they persist, and what persists can grow and morph into dangerous territory. Is this what our veterans fought for? The defense of freedom of speech, yes, but the slippery slope toward any kind of 'ism' isn't really democracy but rather, democracy gone wild.

I encourage us all to take a moment on November 11. Be sure to pause. To reflect and to remember. Learn more about what so many brave Canadians did for you, and for our country, because they believed in protecting and preserving democracy. Don't let them down. One of the easiest ways you can honour their sacrifice is to vote because you have the right to do so. Hold our elected officials to account through your continued advocacy; by delegating, signing petitions, attending community meetings and staying

involved and knowledgeable about what's happening locally, provincially and federally. Your voice matters. Don't let the sacrifices of those who gave everything, so we could have freedom, go to waste. So little is asked of us, the least we can do is remember not only our veterans, but the reasons they fought battles for us in the first place.

Back to those several locations throughout Caledon ? here's where you can participate in Remembrance Day Services: Alton Legion, November 9, gather at 10:15 a.m., Bolton Cenotaph, November 9 at 12:30 p.m. and at Caledon Town Hall, November 11, at 10:50 a.m.

It's that time of year.

We will remember them.