

Making Connections

by SHERALYN ROMAN

In the middle of the budget hullabaloo, work continues in a number of other areas of concern to Caledon residents. Many of us, including groups such as Democracy Caledon, are vocal in fighting to ensure these resident concerns are heard by our Mayor and Council. Others work quietly and diligently behind the scenes, delegating at Council and using social media as a tool to disseminate information (not misinformation!) on our behalf. Finally, there are some individuals who have taken on a role that is starting to extend far beyond our borders, including at both the provincial and federal level, in an effort to ensure our voices are heard. Each of these individuals and groups are making connections across the province and the country, all in hopes of making a difference here at home.

It takes a village, not only to raise a child, but to foster a community that provides a safe, welcoming, space for everyone. Where drinking water is not at risk of contamination and you don't have to take your life in your hands simply trying to get to work every day. While we are in dismay at the costs of running the Town of Caledon, and facing a significant tax increase while questionable items remain on the budget (as referenced in last week's column) the work of protecting other resident interests continues.

The Caledon Community Road Safety Advocacy (CCRSA) and the people behind Caledon Swan Lake have both taken the fight to the next level, making connections across both local and large media outlets (including the CBC) and by forging new relationships with parliamentarians at the federal level and provincially too. These relationships are crucial to ongoing discussions around traffic safety, water safety and aggregate policy, because ongoing barriers here at home, with at least a few local council members, is making the work of protecting Caledon residents difficult.

Keri Parfitt, working on behalf of Swan Lake, a fully rehabilitated, Ministry of Natural Resources approved area (home to a variety of flora, fauna and species including trumpeter swans), has made an excellent connection. In a new development, Tedd Hsu, MPP for Kingston and the Islands (not, as you might have expected, our own local MPP) has formally asked the provincial legislature to answer the question about how they define Swan Lake (lake/wetland, etc).? The answer must be delivered before the holiday break and knowing how the Ministry of Natural Resources defines this area could be pivotal in the fight to preserve it. By forging such a connection, and having the question raised in the provincial legislature, Ms. Parfitt has helped create an opportunity for precedent setting protections to be made. That's because even as the town continues to tinker with a proposed site alteration bylaw that does nothing to address the very real danger that construction waste will be allowed to be dumped here, the question remains not just what happens to Swan Lake but also, what are the implications for all of our pits and quarries across the province if the Town of Caledon is permitted to send the message to aggregate companies that their commitment to the Aggregate Resources Act and investment back into communities is meaningless?? Ms. Parfitt, and others involved in efforts to protect our drinking water in Ward 1, made a valuable connection with Minister Hsu, one that might help us when our own MPP can't - or won't.

Speaking of connections, the women behind the CCRSA ? Carmela Anzelmo-Palkowski, Amanda Corbett and Franca Pisani ? have taken their connection skills to a whole new level. Forging a number of positive relationships with folks like the Ontario Trucking Federation and Canadian Trucking Association, local Dufferin-Caledon MP Kyle Seebach, and MPP Jennifer French who is the provincial transportation critic are just a few of the people acting, or attempting to act, on our behalf.

Just this week, the women also connected in Ottawa with Bloc Quebecois MP Xavier Barsalou-Duval who put forth a motion federally to address serious concerns with ?Drivers Inc.? impacting all Canadians. Drivers Inc. is widely considered to be a business model that causes many of our illegal trucking and improperly trained truck driver woes. As a result of this connection, they were invited to participate in a press conference in Ottawa, drawing attention to the ongoing road hazards we face here in Caledon every single day. Later they were also introduced to the shadow minister of transportation for the Conservatives, MP Dan Albas, for a conversation. Deepening connections across all levels of government and helping to draw nationwide attention to the trucking industry and related safety concerns is crucial in the ongoing fight to create safer roads for all, both here in Caledon and across the country.

These are just two examples of area residents who have day jobs; family commitments, and many other responsibilities, but who are also taking it upon themselves to try and make Caledon a safer, healthier, community. They are making connections in all the right places - even when some of our own local representatives are doing little toward (sometimes even seeming to actively working against) helping to address resident concerns. Making connections just might help to make a difference.

Thank you to all those who speak up and speak out; whether publicly, behind the scenes, by delegating at Council or making the connections required to do the hard work of trying to make Caledon a great place to live.