

Nothing sleepy about our small towns!

by Mark Pavilons

For those of us who grew up in small towns, there's a certain quality you can't fully describe. And yet, it's one that fills your chest with air, widens your smile and brightens your eyes.

Those who criticize it obviously haven't experienced it.

I grew up in rural Caledon, just outside of Bolton. I remember when I went to college some of my peers commenting that Bolton was the 'sticks.' Really? It was 20 minutes from Humber College. Bolton now numbers roughly 28,000.

Sure, rural living had its limitations. Even getting into town (maybe 6 kilometres away) was a chore. And dealing with our 700-foot gravel driveway in the winter was a feat, let me tell you.

But our four-acre piece of paradise was our Eden, our sanctuary. Unfortunately, as my parents aged, we let it go, for new owners to make memories.

I will never forget that place. And if I were ever blessed with the means, I would buy it back in a heartbeat.

Sure, mowing the lawn, watering the gardens, transplanting evergreens kept me busy in my teen years. It kept me out of trouble and taught me some valuable lessons.

My dad was a bit of a 'tree whisperer' and I only wish I had mastered this craft. I'd now long to discuss the meaning of life with resident flora.

Living in a rural area gives you an appreciation, a perspective, like nothing else can. Of course, when you're young, you don't always get it. But you sure do when you age, and wisdom surrounds you.

This was a place my mom truly loved and felt at peace. She was never the same during subsequent moves.

For me, there are times when I sit in my current backyard, facing the neighbouring forest, and pause and reflect. It's beyond calming.

Rural living aside, the small-town charm permeates everything in these parts.

Even as kids we got involved in local sports, community events, parades and service clubs.

I've heard that some service clubs have multi-generational members. That's priceless, another of those qualities you can't fully describe.

Caledon is still a relatively small community, yet its villages and hamlets are far from quiet.

There are events and celebrations in every corner.

For current events in neighbouring King, one only has to glance northward on Highway 27, driving along Main Street in Schomberg, to get a glimpse of our local heartbeat.

This smallest of King villages, at roughly 2,600 people, is a hive of activity. And most of it happens on the historic main drag, tucked away from the hustle and bustle of the hectic world.

Now, that's no easy task, and breathing new life into this village and its Main Street was a solid, committed effort among residents, Township and Economic Development office staff, who seized every available grant, program and opportunity to benefit the community.

This is what I'm talking about, people. This "we're all in it together" attitude is our greatest strength.

As we speak, Schomberg is gearing up for a few arts-related events that will have the whole Township fired up.

The Schomberg Street Gallery, taking place September 18 will see the Main Street closed to traffic. It will be a hive of activity, from one end to the other, showcasing more than 40 local artists and their wares. It's also a great time to check out local merchants, restaurants and coffee shops.

The village is in the midst of "A Taste of Main," an amazing 17-day culinary event that features local eateries. It's a great way to sample each and every one of them and find your new "favourite spot." There are some great restaurants in Schomberg.

In fact, good food abounds across this municipality. I would urge everyone who has the smallest "foodie" in them, to literally eat their way across both Caledon and King, from one end to another.

I truly hope that spirit, that sense of community, never wanes.

Our small municipalities are very good examples of all levels of government working together to achieve some amazing things. While we have rural aesthetics in spades, we're also quite innovative and modern.

Caledon has some great facilities and amenities, with more on the way.

King has enjoyed a slew of recent additions.

The King City Library and Seniors Centre is likely second to none in the GTA. This is the epitome of form and function - it's simply gorgeous and fills a need.

The municipal office building is another marvel of modern construction. This is not typical of "small town Ontario" at all, and would rival any urban office building in the GTA.

King's Township Wide Recreation Centre, currently under construction, will be the crowning jewel in our crown. It will be the most modern creation around, with amenities that you won't find anywhere else.

Again, all of these things don't come together without a great deal of work, along with funding from provincial and federal sources.

But it all begins at the street level, the local voices that speak out. It comes from our elected officials and Township staff, who are more than "civil servants."

They, too, are the heartbeat of this community. They, too, are among the cowboy boot wearing, foot stomping, grass chewing folks we know and love.

Sleepy small town, my eye! This is where it's happening, people!