

Opportunities for learning

By SHERALYN ROMAN

Well the kids are back at school and the numbers don't lie. Secondary school students are facing obstacles in the classroom far greater than any typical high school drama. That is if students can even get inside a classroom! We're hearing of class sizes that, on average, exceed 35+ for many core subjects. A core subject (if you've been out of school for a while) is a subject a child must complete in order to graduate. Scarier still, some classes are simply being cancelled altogether. Core classes, cancelled. This leaves potential students in their final year of high school unable to take a required English class (a ?must have? to graduate) until the summer of 2020! How does one apply for colleges and universities if one is not even given the opportunity to obtain the required curriculum? And why, Dear Readers, why is there not more of a fuss being made about this? The numbers don't lie; at 35+ students even in a classroom of committed, caring and fully invested kids, I suggest there will be pretty much zero opportunity for learning. If your child is in his or her final year and hoping to pursue higher education, you should be very, very concerned.

I know a bit about class size averaging and how some subjects must have fewer students, meaning others bear the burden of larger numbers but I'm truly questioning the math this year. Tech classes or electives that offer hands on experiential learning (if they are being offered at all) are capped at relatively small class sizes in order to ensure the safety and the ability of all students to fully participate. I'm sure we all agree that's wise. That means core subjects like Science or English will have higher numbers. However, by any objective standard 38 students in a classroom is an unmanageable number. Those students who need a little extra help after class? That's a long line of kids waiting for assistance and even the most dedicated teacher won't be able to connect with everyone. If your kid takes a bus to school, has a part time job or plays a sport ? after school isn't an option. I predict students, even solid, smart and committed students, falling through the cracks if these numbers aren't addressed pronto. Of course in DoFo's world, I suppose these same kids just enroll in an online course, teach themselves physics and all will be right in the world!

Speaking of online learning it's not just at the secondary school level we are feeling the impact of Mr. Ford's cuts. Students in university are receiving notification of cancelled classes and/or classes that have been switched, without warning, to an e-learning format. That's right parents ? you just dropped \$5000 in tuition and maybe another \$8,000 (or more) to send your kid off to university and live in residence ? all so that he/she could sleep late, log in from their dorm room and teach themselves PoliSci 101. Professors, what with years of study and specific expertise in their chosen field are highly overrated after all. Much better to educate oneself from the comfort of ones own living space than to go out into the world, interact with other humans, collaborate, discuss and debate. After all, let's not forget DoFo's warning to all us gullible folks about what happens when students gather in places of higher learning. Remember that? In a statement to his devotees some time ago, Mr. Ford wrote, ?I think we all know what kind of crazy Marxist nonsense student unions get up to.? I guess he's hoping if everyone is holed up in dorm rooms rather than gathering in classrooms, he will single-handedly have prevented the possibility of the rise of a totalitarian state. Now, would everybody please stand up and clap when he speaks in the legislature?.oh the irony.

I digress. Back to high school and wait lists for classes and forced e-learning when there are not enough computers in the classrooms or libraries. What to do? The reality is not everyone has a computer. Some kids do still rely on a combination of both their school and public library to provide them the tools and resources they need to be successful. No budget for Chrome books at your school? No budget at home for a laptop and if there IS a computer at home, three students need to share it? No problem - just head on down to your public library ? they haven't had any budget cuts?..oh wait.* Well you could always head back to class instead ? maybe the teacher has been able to shuffle enough desks around to accommodate those 38 students ? sitting in pairs? Sharing chairs? If not, don't worry you probably can't get enough credits to graduate anyway. There's always next year, maybe the math will add up better in ?Grade 13.?

*I should disclose that while I sit on the Caledon Public Library Board, any opinions expressed are strictly my own.