

Outhouse Outrage

by SHERALYN ROMAN

Of all the issues that's attracted the ire of residents in one small portion of Caledon, it appears outhouse outrage is what tops the list. The recent 'installation' of a bathroom facility in the middle of a tiny little park located smack dab in the middle of a relatively tiny little neighbourhood, has residents up in arms. Now, these are the same residents who are also living in the midst of absolute traffic chaos - which I wrote about not too long ago, with suggestions on how to best mobilize as a community - but it appears it's toilets, not traffic, that's really causing a stink.

I'm not, let's be clear, unsympathetic to their plight. Many parks throughout Caledon play host to one of these unsightly blue and yellow boxes and for good reason. It might be that one (or in the case of Valleywood, two) port-a-potties are centrally located in a park because all summer long the park plays host to about 700 people while children play soccer. Not having a bathroom, or two, nearby would be ridiculous. Then again, so is not having permanent facilities at that location but year after year it seems, Valleywood just isn't in the bathroom budget. What IS in the budget? A single, blue sided, yellow-domed 'Johnny on the spot,' for Caledon's Anthem community. It's not what they asked for and as both residents and their Area Councillor Dave Sheen, emphatically claim, it's not what's needed either. My question is, how did we get to this point? How is there so much outrage over an outhouse that residents are signing petitions and the matter has even been brought before Council!

The situation arose a few weeks ago when the outhouse suddenly appeared in the park, within sightlines of multiple homes and literally inches from the sidewalk. While generally speaking there is no 'ideal' location for an outhouse, this one really was plonked down in full view of cars, homes and kids playing at the park. Arguably, that's because it's needed but the residents aren't wrong in pointing it out as both largely unnecessary, and an eyesore. The park itself is tiny; I think there might be a couple of swings there and not much else. It's also centrally located so for most folks it's probably a five-minute walk at best to get back to their own homes and bathrooms. No sports take place at this location, no ice rink nor splash pad and there's no shade to speak of so it certainly isn't a gathering place for anyone who might linger long enough to require a bathroom. So why an outhouse? It seems only the Mayor knows.

Maybe that's why (in addition to the obvious) the outhouse has become so problematic. Why is the Mayor even involved in conversations or decision-making about toilets? Surely, other issues like the aforementioned traffic, or infrastructure or the dissolution of the Region of Peel are what our Mayor should be focussed on? At one point, Councillor Sheen posted this online, 'it's a silly thing to have to spend time on,' but according to him he had no choice but to escalate the matter when 'the Mayor decided the conversation (to have it removed) was over.' Since both he, and Regional Councillor Christina Early have acknowledged they are against the outhouse and in support of the residents in their ward, Sheen states, 'it's not over for me.' He feels an obligation to support resident concerns.

What are those resident concerns, apart from it being unsightly? It's hard to discern when it's alleged there is a petition circulating in favour of keeping the outhouse and one circulating in favour of its removal. Who knows wherein lies the truth.

Is the outhouse outrage real or manufactured? Is it a sign of far deeper concerns or are people just really that ticked off about a toilet? I'm not sure, but what I do know is that continually referring to a port-a-potty as the 'Mayor's Outhouse' isn't likely to encourage cooperation towards a resolution. That said, as many are suggesting, perhaps a resolution was never going to happen.

If residents ever do decide to work together to address something more serious, like the godawful traffic issues plaguing the Southfields and Anthem communities, then how the outhouse outrage is being handled doesn't bode well for them.

Side note: I'm sure what's particularly galling to area residents is that much like Valleywood often feels forgotten when money for parks is handed out, a second brand new park with a splash pad, playground(s) AND proper, fully enclosed bathroom facilities, is being built in Southfields. That Southfields gets two fabulous parks, Valleywood never gets anything and Snell Park gets an

outhouse just seems rude.