

Overwhelmed?

by SHERALYN ROMAN

I know it's a little early in the new year to be feeling overwhelmed but honestly, can ya blame a gal? There's a lot happening in Caledon (and the world) right now and frankly, a lot of it just isn't that great. We might even go so far as to say it's downright awful and while I don't want to make assumptions or 'judge a book by its cover,' 2026 is off to a pretty lousy start. Feeling overwhelmed by it all? Me too.

I think I'll probably leave the griping, worry and yes, even the fear, of what's happening beyond our borders for other pundits to ponder. I'm just not sure how adding my voice to the fray will make any sort of difference in the tragedies unfolding variously in the world. I'm not sure they'll make much of a difference here either for that matter, but something needs to be done so perhaps meager words here might encourage us all as a community to collectively rise up and demand help.

Illegal trucking yards continue unchecked. Applications continue to come before Council for existing yards to be rezoned to allow for parking, but often only after said parking has already begun. I believe the lingo associated with this is attempting to 'zone into compliance,' and Council, as I understand it, is required to hear these applications rather than dismiss them out of hand. Frustrating. As well, truck volume on our roads as a result of these yards, and the many, many large warehousing businesses that have set up shop here, has reached epidemic proportions. Add in the Votorantim Cimentos/CBM St Marys mega quarry application in Ward One and the 'it's still possible?' threats to Swan Lake being filled in by construction debris and that's about a million more trucks on already overcrowded roads.

Ok, so that last number was an exaggeration but the real estimates peg potential truck traffic on Highway 10 and Charleston sideroad at a minimum of 1600+ trucks per day and that number is based only on quarry estimates and doesn't include any potential fill truck traffic. Oh yes, and BTW, while Swan Lake might be enjoying a temporary reprieve, nearby Willoughby Pit has been approved to be filled with over 11,000,000 cubic metres of fill. What will be carrying that fill? Yet more trucks of course.

Next up you have the ongoing issue of Highway 413 which will chew up acre upon acre of agricultural lands, wreak havoc for years during construction, destroy habitats for species at risk and also (yes I know it doesn't even seem possible) increase truck traffic! This will be true at least for the duration of the construction period although it seems likely such an increase would be permanent with trucks barreling past us at highway speeds on the regular.

Meanwhile, as has made the rounds on local TV stations, Caledon seems to be the new epicentre for a round of extortion-related crime. It's a worrisome issue to say the least and also happening at a time when OPP resources are already stretched thin. Caledon after all covers approximately 700 sq. km of geography so policing across the breadth and depth of our community was always going to be a challenge. As we grow by upwards of 30,000 new homes and each of our villages, hamlets, small communities (along with Bolton) expand, the problem - without adequate resourcing to hire more officers - will likely only get worse.

All of this is happening at a time when the Region continues to download services to the Town of Caledon, at the directive of Premier Ford. Yes, the decision to dissolve the Region of Peel was reversed but 'finding efficiencies' is still on the agenda and it remains to be seen what the longer-term impacts to Caledon residents will be in terms of both services and taxes. Will we ultimately gain more control over our roads and infrastructure? If so, which roads? Highway 10 was already repaved under the auspices of making way for Highway 413 and while both roads do (or will) run through Caledon they remain under provincial control so what influence might we have over them? Best to assume none, and even if we do control some of our more local roads, if they are deemed 'Strategic Goods Movement Networks,' it's likely the best we might be able to do is control and/or limit the volume and times of truck travel.

Caledon residents have been asked to absorb a significant volume of change over a relatively short period of time. Such change will continue unabated as we grow. We are also one of the many communities where Strong Mayor Powers have been granted 'to

accelerate key provincial priorities.? We have already felt the impact of these measures too. It can be overwhelming and leave residents feeling defeatist or apathetic but please don't!

Follow in the footsteps of the people who stood up for Swan Lake, who sit on the Town's illegal land use task force or who are fighting for traffic safety. Write to the Premier, our local MPP and to our federal Member of Parliament. Talk to your local and Regional Councillor and attend and/or delegate at Council (even virtually) to hold our elected representatives accountable, and so that they are fully aware of your concerns and priorities. We all play a role in helping to make change happen, even if it's incremental, too slow, or seems impossible.

If Premier Ford can say he 'heard from the people' that we apparently no longer wanted ASE (questionable) and took immediate action, there's always the hope, slim though it might be, that he'll hear, listen to and respect other types of resident concerns.

Caledon has a lot of them and while I absolutely feel overwhelmed and perhaps you do too; sitting around, staying silent and doing nothing won't change anything either.