

Six degrees of separation

by Sheralyn Roman

No doubt in the final weeks leading up to September you began to notice an uptick in the number of politicians and/or their teams knocking on doors, dropping off pamphlets or even advertising here in our paper. Expect to see and hear a great deal more of it in the days to come, including election signs and by ensuring you schedule time to hear from all candidates during the debates, meet and greets and locally hosted events scheduled over the coming weeks. Why is it so important you take the time to get informed? Because, like the old expression (and the movie) *Six Degrees of Separation* suggests, no one ward experiences a single issue. Rather, we are all much more closely linked to, and impacted by, many issues across Caledon and across each of our neighbouring municipalities too.

This election, and whom we choose from amongst the candidates is pivotal to Caledon's future development, yes. But we are also surrounded by decision-makers in nearby municipalities whose choices will also impact us, and vice-versa. It's safe to say that when it comes to the various issues of concern to Caledon (such as water, the environment or trucking and traffic safety) just six (or perhaps even fewer) degrees of separation exist between us and our neighbours to the north, south, east and west. That means we need to elect a Council that not only works for Caledon, but that works well with others too. Collectively, it's these hyper-local, municipal decisions that will help to shape our future.

I've been thinking about this specifically because recently I heard a comment referring to some candidates as *single-issue* candidates. The over-simplification annoyed me. I don't believe such a person exists. Sure, there are candidates in every ward who bring particular expertise to the table, whether that's previous experience as an elected representative, as a community activist or long-time volunteer, or even experience gained while serving in a different kind of elected capacity. Others offer expertise gained through business careers that represent a wide spectrum of experience, or have deep, rural, agricultural roots and understand our shared history.

Regardless of background, however, nobody ever brings just one skill to the table. They bring the collected accumulation of a lifetime of skills and knowledge. More importantly, it is how they will use this cumulative wisdom, and capitalize on their particular area of expertise, to help manage our municipality and work together with our surrounding neighbours. At a time of provincially-mandated growth, and when it sometimes seems like the province isn't interested in working with municipalities, it's especially important that municipalities work with each other.

Right now, water and the environment are of grave concern in Ward 1 and the decisions we make today will impact not only us, but every community downstream. Truck traffic and road safety are an enormous concern across all wards, but particularly so in Ward 1, 2, 5 and 6. That means the work we undertake to address it will, by necessity, require us to cooperate with other municipalities like Vaughan, Erin and Brampton, too.

The downloading of regional roads by the province will absolutely impact Caledon and so too will all the sewage trucks from Erin currently using our local roads to travel to and from Orangeville. As well, there are myriad concerns related to all the quarry trucks (whether filling or extracting) that are travelling to and from neighbouring communities like Hillsburgh. Who pays for all the damages to our roads? Caledon residents or other communities? Who is impacted by the risks to our water and to the environment?

The short answer is that we all are. There are no degrees of separation when it comes to the long-term consequences of harms to the environment or water supply. That's why we need people around the Caledon Council table who are not only fully familiar with the issues, but who are also able to work collaboratively and cooperatively with our neighbouring municipal Councils.

Across all our borders, there are no single issue candidates because what's happening here and in our surrounding communities impacts us all. Calling a person, or slapping a label on something as a *single issue* is naive. People may have stepped up to spearhead much-needed community conversations, but those conversations don't take place in a vacuum. They take place together

with many other concerned citizens, and around council tables in our neighbouring communities, involving people who have demonstrated they are well positioned to understand the nuances of the challenges we face.

To summarize, there's a lot going on. There are water issues in Erin and quite likely water issues coming soon to Caledon (and that's excluding the potential provincial privatization of water!).

Massive new home development and related sewage treatment issues in Erin also impact Alton and Orangeville residents. There's a truck and traffic crisis in Vaughan and Caledon, and all the while, Peel Region's downloading of regional roads will cost each of these municipalities millions of dollars. If Highway 413 does indeed get built one day, the provincial government will expect us to use gravel located close to source, again having direct safety, noise, environmental and water related impacts not just on Caledon, but on every neighbour we have.

Nothing occurs in isolation. Ask your local candidates the big picture questions. Ask them how they might apply their specific knowledge, skills or expertise to working together with others not just around our Council table, but also by working with our neighbouring communities to resolve the many issues directly impacting us all. It's not an exaggeration to say we might be just six degrees of separation from disaster, or success, and it's up to all of us to help elect the best people to ensure it's the latter.