

## Still on the topic of democracy ?

by SHERALYN ROMAN

A review of past columns like "Off to the polls," "Representation Matters," and "Having Your Say" suggests there's been a bit of a theme to my musings of late. Democracy in action has been on full display, and perhaps that's perfectly appropriate given what has been going on here in Caledon, and at both the provincial and federal levels.

Citizens from across Caledon, the province and our country have been weighing in on the state of the government at all levels whether that be online, amongst friends, by taking part in surveys, by delegating at local council or, most importantly of all, by voting. Democracy, it appears, is alive and well and thank goodness for that.

Having recently taken part in various forms of the democratic process, I'm encouraged by what I am seeing around me. Locally, a very large delegation of Caledon residents came together to share concerns about both development and democracy at the local level. Provincially we had our say during this past February's election and prior to the federal election day on April 28, across the country, more Canadians than ever before turned out to vote in advance polls. Estimates pegged that number at 7.3 million voters and early indications seem to suggest the trend for strong, active participation continued on election day. By all accounts, many polling stations had a revolving door all day with long line-ups and I think it's indicative of just how seriously many Canadians are thinking about the state of our nation.

It's encouraging that larger numbers of young adults came out to exercise their right to vote for the first time and it seems Millennial and Gen Z Canadians participated too. Hopefully, in placing their first ballot, younger Canadians will feel more empowered about having their say in what happens in our country. This generation of 20-35-year-old Canadians are most at risk for not seeing dreams of home ownership realized and to this layperson they have a vested interest in "having their say" about it. Hopefully for both new voters and young voters, their participation on April 28 helps to establish a lifelong pattern of voting, encouraging democracy in its truest form while discouraging apathy - a state of being that some leaders might actually prefer from the electorate, resulting as it can, in making it easier to take advantage of citizens. Whether you participate in democracy actively by delegating, writing your council person, MPP or MP, work at a polling station or simply by voting each time you have the opportunity to do so, recognize that it's a privilege denied to many.

The results of the federal election are slowly trickling in as we type this column. As with any election, there are winners and losers and depending on your political leanings, we're not just talking about the candidates, but all those Canadians who were hoping for one outcome and got another. That said, regardless of where you are on the political spectrum, the biggest and most imminent danger to Canadians right now isn't a Liberal, a Conservative or an NDP, it's the threat to our sovereignty, our economy and to the rights to manage our own natural resources.

We are facing a pressure to unite across the country from east to west, and to the north, in order to work together to eliminate all interprovincial trade barriers, making us stronger together. Certainly our sovereignty played a role in the election and may even have been the deciding factor in terms of what drove many of us to the polls. To me, this highlights how important it is, now more than ever before, to unite behind the party with the power, whatever your feelings, because it's in all of our best interests to do so. We have a country to protect. One we love and for which thousands of previous generations of Canadians paid the ultimate price to protect. It's time to put down the "F\*\*k flags" and pick up the Canadian flag, and to come together for the common good.

Democracy might be flawed, but it is better than any dictatorship could ever be. But it only works if we actively participate in it. This election showed Canadians across the country making the effort to do so and while you may not like the outcome, our country will hopefully be all the better for it. It's time to unite together as Canadians, as a sovereign nation, from coast, to coast, to coast. Democracy, like Canada, is alive and well. Let's keep it that way.