

Striking a Balance

by SHERALYN ROMAN

It's a topic that frequently comes up in conversation amongst the citizens of our fair town, I think it may even be one I've addressed at some point in the past and it's this: Caledon is truly at a crossroads at the moment. With some new growth already completed ? and significantly more to come ? striking a balance between the Caledon we know and love and the Caledon of the future, has never been more important. So far, I'm not entirely sure we're getting it right.

I've heard our political leaders talking about the importance of no development without infrastructure. I believe Mayor Groves made a point of saying this repeatedly on her campaign trail and I hope it is the lens through which all future development will be considered.

As it stands right now, I have only to go for a very short drive southwest of my current address to find massive growth and next to no infrastructure, at least certainly nowhere near what's required. As a result of poor planning and lack of infrastructure there are now massive traffic jams taking place every single day and some Caledon residents are currently living in virtually inaccessible subdivisions. This issue is about to be compounded significantly as Caledon attempts to rectify (or at least begins to address the situation) by building access roads that may eventually help but which will make living in communities like Valleywood an absolute nightmare while bridge and road construction takes place. I'm not naive and I know we can't build every road, park or school in advance of new home construction but surely there has to be a way to strike a balance.

The arrival of thousands of homes will also mean the arrival of thousands of cars, and thousands of people, all requiring such services as roads, libraries and recreation centres. You know, infrastructure things, the kinds of things development money is supposed to pay for, or was anyway, until Doug Ford gave developers a free ride.

Caledon East is an example of trying to expand its community centre and library alongside housing development but I'm pretty sure Southfields residents, who can only get out of their subdivision via one of the worst intersections on earth when heading south or when heading north, via a single lane road and roundabout would no doubt say the Town got it wrong.

Speaking of exits, I can't wait to see how the entrance and exit will be handled at the top of a hill on a snowy day on Airport Rd. in Caledon East when all those new homes are completed! Housing pledges are nice - and asking the provincial government to ?provide local and regional municipalities with any funding shortfalls as a result of Bill 23,? to address our infrastructure crisis is a fair ask but will the money materialize? It's doubtful and we still have a responsibility to plan appropriately.

Speaking of new homes, communities and the ?striking a balance? theme, in my mind the concept must also refer to finding ways in which to appropriately welcome the diversity of citizens calling Caledon home, thus ensuring they don't just ?feel? but are a part of the community. The voices of equity deserving groups, the LGBTQ2S community, racialized and Indigenous persons must be seated at community tables and certainly also within the Town's offices. Yet, it's only recently (March 16, 2023) that the Town of Caledon even posted a position for a ?Coordinator, Culture and Engagement,? whose focus it will be ?to lead corporate culture change and community outreach initiatives and ensure that diversity and inclusion strategies and programs are embedded within core processes and day-to-day operations across the Town of Caledon.?

The individual will be ?responsible for the coordination and implementation of the Town's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) and Framework and Indigenous Engagement Protocol (IEP).?

It's good news - yes, but at least 5 -10 years overdue. As well, what is the Town doing specifically to ensure a diversity of representation across the many committees, boards and organizations that serve our community directly? How are we reaching out and/or making specific efforts to engage with our fellow Caledon residents? Organizations that I have had the honor of serving with in the past have all begun the process of seeking to expand the diversity of voices at their board tables but many of those

organizations require that Council supports and approves candidates and that they in turn will recognize the opportunity to recruit and appoint citizens that mirror the Caledon community. In at least one instance, even maintaining the existing diversity of perspectives at the table was not manageable and that's disappointing. I and several others attempted to raise this issue more than three years ago and a number of community members rallied to form an ad hoc Equity Task Force of sorts. Despite our best intentions, we weren't necessarily the right people for the job and when we tried to solicit support from the Town there was none to be had. Three years later, I have to ask ? does Caledon even have an EDI Committee? Orangeville does. Shelburne does. Dufferin County does too. Without one, I'm not sure we are anywhere close to striking a balance of representation yet. Let's hope a Coordinator of Culture and Engagement has some influence.

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