

Summer ends on a high note? ish

by SHERALYN ROMAN

Summer is ending on a high note ?ish,? especially if you're a fish. Summer is not ending on a high note for others however, particularly developers and perhaps even, for Premier Doug Ford. For those that love the CNE and weird gastronomic treats - this year's deep fried butter chicken lasagna might contribute to your ?high,? or to the low of a stomach ache! If you are struggling with addiction, there are now fewer safe places to get high, but if alcohol is your drug of choice, there's no shortage of access. About the only thing that can be guaranteed, with no ?ish? attached, is that summer is indeed ending.

First, in welcome news, it appears the federal government has stepped in with a potential ?stay of execution? for a rather important little fish - the Redside Dace. This little fish is just one of 11 species at risk should the route for the proposed Highway 413 be approved. In our interconnected world, even this tiny creature plays an important role in environmental and human health and ?Under the federal Species At Risk Act (SARA), any activity affecting Redside Dace's critical habitat must comply with SARA and the Fisheries Act to ensure it does not jeopardize the species' survival or recovery.?

Surely, paving over 2,000 acres of farmland and 400 acres of greenbelt while also destroying the Redside Dace' habitat must qualify as jeopardizing its future? Tim Gray, Executive Director of Environmental Defence, was quoted as saying, ?It's really hard to see how those permits could be issued with the current configuration of the highway.? We can only hope such a logjam, issued with the strength of the federal government behind it, will at a minimum slow down, if not stop, Premier Ford's efforts to get this highway built.

In a perfect world, perhaps this delay buys enough time for the Conservatives to figure out what most of us already know: that there's over 150 kms of pristine, multi-laned, underutilized highway running east/west that could easily accommodate significantly more vehicular/truck traffic. In further good news, it might also eliminate the supposed ?need? for yet another quarry in the already blighted Caledon landscape!

In other news, summer is also certainly ending on a high if your choice of mood-elevating substances is alcohol. Not that I specifically recall Ontarians asking for increased access, but according to Premier Ford he's doing us all a favour by making alcohol available at what seems to be every single corner store and gas station in the Caledon area. With close to 24-hour round the clock access (sales start as early as 7 a.m. and end at 11 p.m.) you should have no problem getting your fix. I've written previously that I appreciate we are all adults and should be treated as such. But we are experiencing a significant increase in traffic accidents and fatalities in Caledon, and with little or no training or monitoring of the convenience store clerks selling alcohol, I foresee increased risks of sales to minors and/or the already inebriated - and therefore more accidents too.

On the other hand, with the recent decision to close 10 safe injection sites, staying safe while managing drug addiction just got a whole lot harder. I acknowledge it's a controversial topic and safe injection sites near schools and daycares are problematic. Closing them altogether however, simply shifts the burden elsewhere; on to our hospital system, paramedics and first responders, and potentially into public parks and other community spaces - all while doing nothing to address the root causes of drug addiction in the first place.

Teachers, if you don't already know how much I love you, let me remind both you, and every parent out there who ever complained about teachers while lasting only three whole days teaching their own kids during the pandemic, you are an amazing group of humans. Every day you welcome far too many children into your underfunded classrooms, (thanks Doug Ford) each of whom differs with varying degrees of support required, and you do your best to ensure they are safe, secure, supported, and taught the basics, all while possibly having some fun too! Good luck this year and to all returning and new students - especially those marking milestones like kindergarten, middle school, high school or post-secondary education.

Speaking of school, it's not too late to help out those struggling to absorb any further expenses in an already tight family budget.

Back to school can be expensive and if you can, Caledon Community Services has a great program supporting families. Kidz in Caledon helps local families with back-to-school kits and in providing healthy lunches as just two examples. Support for this and other programs helping families right here in town is always welcome.

Finally, on a personal note, a wedding is always a great way to spend a summer day - especially when it's your own kid that's getting married. You didn't sign up to hear my life story but as you already know, it's been a challenging year so this special day was perfect and I feel very blessed! So much so that even Premier Ford can't bring me down and a wee, tiny, little fish can actually raise my spirits even higher - no ?ish? qualifier required!