

Temperatures are rising

by SHERALYN ROMAN

Seems the heat of the summer has temperatures rising in more ways than one. Whether it's festering old news that just won't go away or more recent complaints, Caledon Council has been keeping someone very busy lately. That someone is Caledon's Integrity Commissioner, David Boghosian. To add to the drama, the IC himself, while in the course of his duties, also seems to have made his own error when he mistakenly named a complainant who had asked to remain anonymous. Amongst all of this noise and finger pointing there's still a Town to be run. We'd be wise to remember the old adage about finger-pointing: "When you're pointing a finger at someone, you've got three pointing back at yourself." In other words, perhaps it's time to refocus our collective energy on the business of running the Town before someone gets seriously burned.

I don't know that there is any benefit to listing the various complaints that have been investigated by Mr. Boghosian. One can, as I have done, read his detailed reports for themselves and draw their own conclusions about where fault, if any, lies. This column isn't about finger-pointing, but rather a commentary on all the distractions. In the first IC-investigated incident, we should be more concerned that the distribution of a "fact sheet" on 12 MZO's specifically excluded some Council members than any comments made about its distribution. Could the Councillor have used a different turn of phrase when expressing their disappointment at the uneven dissemination of information? Probably. But even the Integrity Commissioner deemed the actual distribution to be "poor politics, especially if it (the fact sheet) was not shared with the Councillors who were present." Our Mayor and Councillors have a job to do and all this finger pointing, by the public and others, is simply a distraction from the real issue, the passing of 11 of 12 MZO's and their long-lasting potential consequences on Caledon as we know it.

Speaking of real issues, another Councillor has recently found themselves a target for two separate reasons; one of them likely dating back to last summer's placement of a port-a-potty in a park. No doubt referring to such an addition as the "Mayor's Outhouse" at the time didn't earn the Councillor any favours, and it's possible the seeds of discontent have been festering since then. In fact, it was literally this same week last year that I commented in this space on the topic.

This summer it appears the conversation is still ongoing and the Councillor has landed in "hot water" with their comments about how parks are being utilized. Again, I ask, could the Councillor have chosen their words differently? You betcha! They weren't great but, when the Integrity Commissioner launched his investigation, and a replay of the comments recorded at the time clearly demonstrated that at least one of the words deemed to be particularly offensive had not actually been verbalized, I think the IC reached a reasonable conclusion by asking Council to undergo sensitivity training. Now let's hope all this talk about toilets can finally be flushed away.

Unfortunately, however, the same Councillor noted above, in yet another round of finger-pointing, may now find themselves defending a decision to share information with the media, specifically, Global News. On July 18th, Caledon's CAO Nathan Hyde, in a post on the Town's website called "Setting the Record Straight," claimed certain statements made to Global news by a member of Council were "incorrectly stated as facts." Hyde further wrote that the Town has "asked Global News to correct the article and is determining next steps internally."

Will the Councillor be called before the Integrity Commissioner yet again? Is this yet more distraction from the business of running a Town experiencing massive growth? Yes on both counts. The exodus of Caledon staff has been written about before in this space and significant changes in staffing should always be cause for concern if for no other reason than there's a Town to run, and business to conclude, and significant changes can potentially hinder that work. But so too can ongoing IC investigations. It's hot outside but apparently even hotter inside the Town of Caledon offices and Council chambers. I'm sure the Integrity Commissioner could use a break. Mr. Boghosian has had his work cut out for him lately and recently commented on the scope of his responsibilities, and perhaps also his frustration, in a letter to the Mayor and Members of Council that was scheduled to go before Council this past Tuesday.

In it he seems to suggest he's concerned about the Town's Code of Conduct in general, finding it 'deficient,' and that our processes could use some work. As well, after what he described as a 'circus' during one recent Council meeting where members of the community were 'raising issues of no relevance to Council (ie. debating the merits of my decision)' he took the opportunity to remind Council of this: 'The fact of the matter is, there is no scope for Council debate or resident input on my reports and findings (in contrast to penalties). My decisions are quasi-judicial in nature for which recourse can be had by way of a judicial review application to the Divisional Court. They are not matters that can be changed by Council on account of resident input.' In other words, a gentle reminder I think to all members of Council, members of the public, and to all of us really that it's time to turn down the heat in Council chambers, stop all the finger-pointing and distractions and to focus instead on the important business of running the Town of Caledon.