

The Gloves Are Off!

by SHERALYN ROMAN

Oh, Caledon how have I missed you, let me count the ways.

Itchy fingers hovered above my keyboard for weeks, wishing and hoping and longing to weigh in on the events of the day and what days they have been!

An election, usually prime fodder for column material, a crisis in education that's about to rear its ugly head, a resurgence of ?RSV? (hmmm, COVID?) that has our youngest citizens hospitalized in droves and an asphalt plant planted in the middle of Town. Where to even start?

Maybe I'll head to my favourite character first, Mr. Ford, who had the temerity to release a pumpkin carving tutorial just in time for Halloween. He and his comms team actually (and apparently unironically) included in the script the following words: ?full disclosure, folks.? Oh, how I howled! This coming from a Premier who has been fighting in court for months, maybe years, to hide his mandate letters and is currently fighting again in court about an ?invitation? he received to attend the EA hearings in Ottawa. It seems about his complete lack of skills at pumpkin carving he is willing to fully disclose, but if you want disclosure around any meaningful facts? He'll see you in court.

Speaking of court, in some ways I suppose I am glad I wasn't elected as your local school trustee for the Dufferin Peel Catholic District School Board for many reasons including the fact that teachers and/or education workers may soon (sadly) be fighting in court. In fact, if I am honest, there are many reasons I am quite happy I didn't win because as someone who campaigned for equitable, safe and inclusive access to education for every student there are apparently well over 1,900 Caledon/Dufferin voters who feel quite significantly different than me and I'm not sure that's a population, no matter how hard I try to be nice, I can support, or work with.

But I digress, back to court. It appears court is Doug's favourite place to be, because as I write this, he appears to have given direction to the Minister of Education (who is obviously familiar with how to live on \$39,000 or less) to legislate CUPE back to work should they choose to exercise their democratic right to strike. Seems the only unions Doug prefers are those who stand behind him for photo ops announcing that the 413 will soon tear apart our beautiful Caledon farms, trails and wetlands.

Ah yes, Caledon. Protected white and greenbelt lands are also on my mind because of the recent election. It appears Caledon rather resoundingly voted for the idea that we might somehow be able to influence transportation decisions, opting for an extension of the 427 north to Hwy 9 and a reconfiguration of 410 north to allow for easier access to all points north.

In turn, they did not vote for a GO Train that may or may not get built in the next 30 years or the construction of the 413. It seems to me and my limited political knowledge that much of this election came down to gravel. Emergency Council meetings about it, how it is excavated and where, how and when it is used, and the toxicity (proven or perceived) of a looming asphalt plant smacked down in the middle of it all. As is often the case after an election, only time will tell if Caledon has truly made a good decision.

Decisions are difficult. They involve choices. I had an interesting conversation with someone during the election. It might even have been at one of the debates. We talked about ?choices? and the person with whom I was speaking wondered this: Why is it that in our current political, social and economic climate everyone is SO focussed on ?This OR That.? In other words, that our choices must be clear ?unreservedly so. But are they? Why can't we work towards a more collaborative approach to decision making? Why can't we have ?This AND That?? Why are so many of us not willing to compromise for the greater good and are instead digging ourselves into ever-deepening trenches from which, when we attempt to emerge, we are simply shot down. Digging in, becoming further entrenched, widening the gaps between one another has never been a successful strategy for reaching fair, equitable and realistic decisions that benefit every citizen. We have only to look back a little over 100 years in history to see how well trench warfare

worked.

Think I'm being extreme? Extremism is on the rise in every corner of the world as we speak, sure it's in varying degrees, what with war in Ukraine and voter collusion, threats and violence in the US, but make no mistake, it's everywhere ? even here in our beautiful little town of Caledon.

Our own election decisions were difficult and fraught with conflict ? and, yes, extremism.

Vaccinations should not be an either/or. Respecting our shared history, farmland while also planning for the future should not be an either/or. Access to education where every student's lived experience is represented in the classroom should not be an either/or. Education workers fighting for a living wage should not experience the threat of an either/or scenario.

We can do better. This AND that are decisions we can ALL live with.