

## The heat is on. (Part 2)

by SHERALYN ROMAN

Last week we shared the good news about a PDSB healthy vegetables growing initiative and also used the idea of a summer vacation as an excuse to ask residents to consider a donation to the Exchange before heading out for any cottage or camping adventures. I think we referenced the heat as well? This week, after experiencing yet another hot and particularly hazy weekend, we're still thinking about summer. This time, it's about how ?the heat is on,? both literally and figuratively.

As Canadians, we are often taken to task for complaining about the weather. In summer it's ?too hot,? in winter ?too cold,? and never it seems, like Goldilocks' porridge, ?just right.? Worse, we're told that because it's cold in winter we are not allowed to complain about how hot it is in the summer.

But the reality is, particularly these last few summers, it's not only hot, it's hotter than ever.

Climate change is real and Canada is feeling its impact in real time. According to both Natural Resources Canada and the Canadian Climate Institute, ?Canada's climate is changing.? We are experiencing ?higher temperatures, more frequent and extreme weather events, and rising sea levels,? and perhaps even more concerning, ?Canada is warming faster than anywhere else on earth,? as much as twice as fast. Just some of the impacts include heat waves that spark forest fire risks and which elevate health and safety risks for all Canadians and particularly; infants, the elderly and/or those with chronic health conditions. Research shows that climate scientists (which include researchers from geology, astrophysics, oceanography, atmospheric physics and more) are united in their agreement ?that the planet is warming and that human beings are the cause.?

What does this mean to us locally? Well, to start, the continued onslaught of applications to fill pits and quarries that have already completely rehabilitated (or where significant progress has been made) and now serve as home to flora, fauna and species at risk are just one example of the potential negative impact us humans might have on the world around us. These applications put our groundwater/drinking water at risk, denude the earth of its natural protection (trees come to mind) and also, as a result of the sheer volume of trucks required to move said fill, greatly contribute to greenhouse gas emissions.

According to research, ?trucks contribute significantly to greenhouse (GHG) emissions?and freight trucks, in particular, are a growing contributor.? Allowing any former rehabilitated or water-filled pits to be filled with construction-related detritus will only result in already overburdened roads becoming yet more clogged with greenhouse gas emissions spewing trucks, making the matter infinitely worse than it already is.

Also concerning was a recent decision by the Ontario government to make a regulatory change allowing corporations to transfer ?water-taking permits.? While the name of the permit is super-obvious, perhaps calling something a ?regulatory change? is the real misnomer. It seems to imply this is just some small change to the wording of a policy or something equally innocuous.

In truth, any time we are talking about taking water from one source, and transferring it to another (in this case, bottling it up in plastic bottles for sale) we should all be concerned.

According to the folks at Water Watchers, the change allows corporations to transfer water-taking permits, potentially eliminating the requirement for new owners to apply for a new permit (and then presumably) undergo proper environmental and public scrutiny. Saying the move ?represents a sweeping erosion of Ontario's environmental protections,? Water Watchers suggest it will not only undermine the potential for public oversight, but also ?violates Indigenous rights, and accelerates the privatization and exploitation of our shared water systems.?

At first glance, and looking at historical concerns around Nestle and water taking in Erin, the concern seems centered around bottled water, but Caledon residents beware. According to Water Watchers, ?it is now clear that this proposal would apply to all types of

water-taking permits ? not just water bottling, but also aggregate operations, mining, exploration, industrial uses, and other commercial extractions. Further, the regulation is designed to apply retroactively, and may even include expired permits, raising serious questions about accountability, regulatory integrity, and the potential for de facto perpetual water-taking rights.?

Don't we already have enough concerns around pits, quarries, groundwater and drinking water in the Caledon area? Do we really need to add more? It's beginning to seem like Ward 1 is well and truly ground zero for environmental degradation, traffic woes, water worries, and on and on the list goes. Oh, and by the way, water should never be a corporate asset, but I guess if your name is Doug Ford, water is there for the taking ? or for the blocking (as in the view and/or public access to it a la Ontario Place.) Or to put it more politely as the folks at Water Watchers have: ?water is a sacred, shared resource?essential to ecosystems, communities, and future generations.?

Smoke, high humidity, forest fires and yes, digging up dirt from one area, combining it with construction garbage, then driving it to another area to dump it, are all impacting how we live, work and breathe. These factors, combined with an application for a blasting quarry all within the same few kilometres at the northwest end of town, ensures that Caledon is in trouble.

Much like the rest of Canada where wildfires are the ?new normal? and temperatures are rising, locally we're in trouble too. The heat is on and the decision-makers aren't helping the situation.

If we are willing to destroy an environmentally and ecologically sound lake, one that supports all manner of wildlife and which could potentially impact our drinking water supply ? and two other similar fill applications are also on file ? combined with potential water woes, the impacts of climate change here in Caledon are sure to go from ?bad to worse.?