

The View From Here

by SHERALYN ROMAN

A few nights ago I had occasion to take a slightly different route both to and from a location in Caledon. It was one I hadn't travelled in quite some time and frankly, the view had changed significantly and not for the better. It struck me as rather sad that Caledon, once priding itself in the Town's tourism promotions by using an iconic picture of the Caledon hills looking down over the city of Toronto skyline, now doesn't offer much of a view at all. The view from here is no longer something special.

We all understand that progress means change and some of us don't like change very much. By Caledon standards, living here for a mere 26 years, I am a relative newbie and no doubt some of you who have lived here for generations were super frustrated when my home was built. Now I guess it's my turn.

When you live in such a picturesque place it's natural to want to preserve and protect it, just as it's natural many others would like to live here too. Finding that perfect balance ? particularly when the Province has mandated parts of Caledon as a community ?for growth,? in both employment lands and in housing, is a struggle. Our Council has been grappling with it for some time now and just as often as growth hits the council agenda, so too do concerned Caledon residents delegate against it. I believe this to be a pivotal point in the development of our community and that finding that perfect balance will require not just careful planning considerations but also a little bit of chutzpah, creativity, community involvement and negotiation.

Chutzpah in my mind incorporates each of the other three points. Chutzpah translates to a Council and a community that is willing to stand up for what is right, even if it is against those with power. Easier to write about than do certainly, but surely there has to be some way to find solutions that benefit Caledon the beautiful, and Caledon the town where you can live, work AND play.

Such solutions may require some creativity and negotiation and definitely require a community that is committed to taking action, not just complaining about such growth challenges on Facebook (or in a community newspaper column!) It requires research, like reading a traffic study report that indicated Mayfield Rd., west of Hurontario would be a multi-lane east/west route by 2021 to facilitate housing development and then attempting to discover why that has not yet happened and huge bottle-necks abound.

It means taking the time to attend a meeting happening tonight (May 12) that will review Caledon's Multi-Model Master Transportation Plan. It might even mean taking time to attend a protest against the construction of Highway 413 along a route that will cause significant (and irreversible) environmental damage. Everyone has to be a part however, it can't just be ?the few.?

Finally, managing change requires leadership from people who are willing to take a stand even when faced with a ?David and Goliath? kind of scenario.

Do we need better east/west routes that can accommodate commercial (read, trucking) traffic? Absolutely. Mayfield Rd. is a work in progress and if expanded, as had been planned, could do so much more. Do we ALSO need better north/south routes (Hwy 50, 10 and 427) to do the same? Absolutely. Those roads are each already in existence and not only CAN but SHOULD be expanded. One other comes to mind and has been around for quite some time now. If north/south access to that road was made easier, it could easily accommodate truck traffic simply by reducing toll charges.

My route home the night that sparked these musings featured a truly magnificent sunset. The sky was multi-hued and blazing in all its magnificence. For one brief stretch of road, a farmer's field, barn and home stood alone against the skyline and made for a picture postcard snapshot of what Caledon was. For most of the drive, however, multiple large warehouses and trucking yards, as well as some strange new depot of storage canisters (full of goodness knows what) blocked most of the view. With all the trucks on the road, stopping to take a picture would have been foolhardy.

Progress is important and so too are employment opportunities and housing but paving over paradise to achieve it achieves nothing

in the end.

The view from Caledon is rapidly becoming no different than the view from Brampton, or Mississauga, or Ajax or Markham or?you get the idea.