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This ?n that

by SHERALYN ROMAN

Regular readers will know that occasionally, when feeling overwhelmed by the news cycle, I find myself reduced to simply listing a lengthy list of grievances under the heading ?this ?n that.? I suppose I do so as an attempt to draw your attention to the kinds of issues we should all be concerned about, while at the same time, not using an entire newspaper's worth of space to expound upon them at length. I have, after all, occasionally been accused of being wordy! So in today's edition of ?this ?n that? we have: trucking, aggregate, destroying the great outdoors and accessing the great outdoors, elections, hotel bills, and ? believe it or not ? espionage, followed by ?stuff happens.? Most of which are important matters impacting Caledon residents directly, but some are just egregious examples of our current Premier's disrespect for members of the voting public.

Here then, in no particular order, are just some of the things happening in the province whilst politicos lounge about on their 21-week summer vacation and the Premier soaks up the summer sun in Muskoka. This, by the way, being one of the many locations increasingly off-limits to Ontario residents. It seems we can go almost nowhere these days to access public spaces like beaches, parks and conservation areas, at least that is, without spending copious amounts of money for the privilege of doing so. Have you tried visiting a conservation area lately? I don't know how a family can afford to enjoy a day out in the great outdoors! It cost a friend and I a total of $27 recently to attend a birthday party. That's because it was being held in a conservation area. Just two adults in a car, which left me wondering how much a family of four or five might cost. Access to public spaces seems to be getting more and more difficult. What with the Ford government destroying conservation areas and tearing down public spaces like Ontario Place, those of us without cottages on a lakefront are falling increasingly on the side of the ?have nots? when it comes to summer enjoyment in the great outdoors.

Look at me, I'm already digressing significantly. Let's focus on Caledon.

In the ongoing ?conversation? about aggregate and the potential for a blasting quarry in Ward One, the Ford government has made plain their disdain for resident concerns by overruling the years of effort by the Town of Caledon and area residents with the simple stroke of a pen. More specifically, not a pen so much as a broad sideswipe that literally disallows the many forward-thinking attempts of our Town and its citizens to ensure at least some measure of control over aggregate extraction. Area resident Tony Svelka, who has researched and published extensively on the topic, said it best, calling it ?a chilling precedent, one that should alarm anyone who believes in accountable government, environmental stewardship, or the basic right of communities to shape their own future.? So much for democracy, and so much for the environment too.

Meanwhile, various Ministers of Ford's government continue to rack up questionable hotel expenses. Sure, one of them resigned recently, but to be clear, he only left his position as the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Gaming and did not resign from the government itself where he continues to serve as the MPP for Willowdale. As for the other guy who not only billed hotel expenses, but is also alleged to have used constituency funds to advertise in his father's paper? No consequences whatsoever that we are aware of. Perhaps that's because, speaking of hotels, the Conservatives were booking yet another hotel, this one in Jamaica, so they could spy on their arch nemesis as she vacationed there.

Yes, the Ford government actually sent someone to spy on Bonnie Crombie, former leader of the Liberal Party and current candidate to get her old job back as Mayor of Mississauga. Sometimes I wish this column was actually a vlog so you could literally see me shaking my head and rolling my eyes in disbelief. Just, why? Why are we engaging in espionage level tactics over someone spending a few days off down south? Are we that afraid of Bonnie Crombie? This isn't a Jack Ryan movie, Mr. Premier ? you're supposed to be running a government not running off to the Caribbean on some little asinine adventure. Oh, and by the way, when someone calls you on this kind of nonsense, a response of ?stuff happens? is a wholly inadequate reply.

Here's where we really need Mr. Ford ? and Caledon residents in particular have been drawing your attention to the urgency of the matter for quite some time now: Road safety.

We have collectively ?had it up to here? with you and your transportation Minister Sarkaria telling us we have the safest roads in North America. We absolutely, categorically, do not. The sheer volume of so-called ?chameleon carriers,? the Driver's Inc. ?business model,? untrained and unsafe drivers, illegal trucking yards and dangerous operators offering ?driver training? has ballooned out of control. News outlets have done undercover reporting to expose the urgency of resident concerns. The Auditor General has highlighted where the government has failed us.

Petitions, the Ontario Trucking Association, groups (both local and province-wide) like our own CCRSA, all have logged thousands of hours protesting, presenting at the municipal, provincial and federal levels of government and joining with other like-minded groups and MPP's who support the cause of road safety. What do they hear in response? Nothing but a resounding silence from your government.

People are dying on our roads every, single, day and you CAN do something about it, Mr. Premier. Not only CAN you, but you MUST. Especially here in Caledon where we are already at significant risk day in and day out, and that's before your aggregate policies and Highway 413 construction allows hundreds more potentially dangerous trucks on our roads.

Where do we go for help? With your government on an extended leave of absence, with your clear disdain for the democratic principles of municipalities managing their own affairs, and smart a$$ remarks like ?stuff happens? when questioned about that little political junket down south, what you are truly saying to the residents of Ontario is not only that you just don't care, but also, that you are clearly not worried about any potential political consequences either. Despite your occasional bombastic talk directed at Mr. Trump about how he manages the US, what you have really shown us is that you have achieved a Trumpian level of disdain for the electorate right here in Ontario. And that's how I feel about ?this ?n that.?