

This, that and the other?

by SHERALYN ROMAN

Sometimes, as has been the case this past few weeks, the news comes so fast and furious it's hard to keep up. Fanning the flames are a series of smaller twigs and larger timbers: or as we might refer to them, the greenbelt, the million march, the 413, crowded classrooms and the ongoing decimation of staff at Caledon's Town Hall. Each of these timbers are being heaped upon an already flaming fire, so quickly that the conflagration is likely now visible from space. Whether we focus on this, that or the other, the news is grim and the flames flickering.

Starting with the ongoing greenbelt drama (and related 413 news) the impact on Caledon of Doug Ford's reversal on the greenbelt could have a very real impact. The flip-flop is good news for threatened species, the watershed, prime agricultural farmland and really, all of us who will in turn continue to benefit for generations to come. Or at least we hope. Given the history of flip-flopping and the pace of development taking place across Ontario but particularly here in Caledon, who knows how long the land will actually be protected. As Mike Schreiner, leader of the Green Party recently asked; 'This is the same premier who called the Greenbelt a 'scam, a field of weeds' just a couple of months ago, how can we trust that he won't try the same thing again with his Greenbelt review in a year or two?'

Still on the topic, in case anyone thinks the 413 has just quietly gone away as a result of the greenbelt fiasco, it hasn't. Public consultations are happening now including one specifically for Peel Region (for now, it still exists) residents. It's a virtual public information Zoom call taking place on October 5 between 6 - 8 p.m. Do your best to be there - this is a highway that much like greenbelt development, would primarily benefit developers and have only minimal impact on commuters - all while once again decimating the environment around it.

Some of the same developers that own greenbelt designated lands are also land owners in and around the 413 corridor. Perhaps that's why they're quiet on the topic of the greenbelt itself as they patiently await approval to build this highway instead? These are embers which may quickly turn into flames once again.

The opening session of the fall legislature was also somewhat of a conflagration with health care protestors outside and the threat of more protestors allegedly heading towards Queens Park in a convoy. With school back in session and as many as 32 children in a kindergarten classroom and the continued hacking away at the foundations of our health care system, the government has much to answer for. Yet, not much was heard from the Minister of Health or the Minister of Education. Relative silence too, on the so called 'Save the Children' protestors who it seems no one wants to comment upon lest it costs them supporters. These misinformed 'million marchers' are loud - much like the 'freedom' convoy was - and they are fanning flames that have already spread like wildfire across the US. Their 'fuel' is lies, purposeful disinformation and hurtful rhetoric. The curriculum for schools in both the public and Catholic education systems is easily accessible for anyone who wishes to read what it ACTUALLY contains but that appears to be too much trouble for some. Thankfully, in many cities across the country, including closer to home here in Orangeville, the voices of reason and calm, the voices supporting a person's right to love whom they love, outweighed the angry. My fear is that it's only a temporary dousing of the flames however.

Finally, under the category of 'Don't let the door hit you on the way out,' we have the ongoing fire at Town Hall. At a time when the dissolution of the Region of Peel is rapidly approaching and Caledon is being called upon to absorb thousands of new homes across the region, heads are rolling at an alarming rate and with little or no consultation (or even awareness) with our duly elected Town Council. Development requires careful planning and attention. Caledon is already facing challenges with the ongoing use of MZOs, rapid warehousing development, homes being built faster than local roads can accommodate them and yes, the ever present greenbelt and whitebelt land issues and yet what just happened?

After being specifically sought out and hired by the Town, the Director of planning and chief planner Antonietta Minichillo has been removed. The Town's solicitor, Alexis Alyea has been removed. A restructuring has taken place that will allegedly 'save \$1 million

annually from the restructuring.? Sure, some taxpayers might be nodding along thinking saving money is good and it is, especially when there's a good chance Caledon having to go it alone as a community will result in significantly higher taxes for us residents at some point in the not-so-distant future. But cutting your chief planner just as we are being asked to grow significantly? Someone who was lauded for bringing innovation and change to Caledon's approach to planning? The flames at Town Hall right now seem out of control. Perhaps it's a good job the Mayor is focusing so significantly on recent media messaging on the 'Saved by the Beep' campaign. It won't help Caledon staff but it sure is a distraction from the ongoing fire.