

# We're all in this together

by SHERALYN ROMAN

For what I'm sure are obvious reasons, particularly of late, traffic safety continues to be a topic of conversation in Caledon homes, coffee shops and even at Council meetings.

We are at a critical juncture in Caledon. Faced with already maddeningly dangerous roads, rampant illegal truck yards, a focus on rapid new housing builds and either (or both!) new quarries and the filling of lakes with construction debris, there will potentially be hundreds more cars and trucks on already crowded roads not meant to accommodate them. All of which points to Caledon facing a literal road emergency. It doesn't matter where you live in Caledon, we're all in this mess together and we need to work together to figure a way out.

Recently, I had the opportunity to meet with Amanda Corbett and Carmela Anzelmo-Palkowski of the CCRSA. Together with Franca Pisani they founded a movement, the Caledon Community Road Safety Advocacy Group, which seems to be gaining traction not just locally but across the country. It's a movement I have written about before and is focussed on several of the key issues outlined in the opening paragraph. I appreciated their time visiting the little hamlet of Alton which, as local residents will know, is not immune to truck traffic and road safety issues. It was an opportunity for them to see first-hand some of what is happening there and what I learned at the same time is how they have been travelling throughout all the villages and hamlets that comprise Caledon, in an effort to learn how each community is being impacted by traffic and safety issues.

The CCRSA might originally have been born out of frustration concerning illegal truck yards and traffic issues in the south Bolton area, but what they have learned by travelling throughout the region is that major public safety issues exist across Caledon, and that we are all in this together regardless of the Ward we live in. They acknowledge the hard work already done through the efforts of other local residents, (Kate Hepworth in Caledon Village comes to my mind, as do the residents who comprise the Alton Village Association) and of local and area Councillors like Christina Early and Lynn Kiernan to address traffic safety and reaffirm that, everyone has a role to play, that there is so much opportunity to do good things together. To this layperson, it seems like an uphill battle, but I remain motivated by CCRSA's optimism and commitment and agree with the sentiment we can't stop now.

As frustratingly slow as the wheels of progress move, even the Town plays a role through bylaw efforts to curb illegal trucking yards and through the implementation of the Illegal Land Use Task Force. But we need more. Likening the many issues impacting road safety to an octopus, the CCRSA acknowledges that issues like bail reform, red light cameras, ASEs, and penalties, both financial (for businesses) and punitive (for bad drivers) must also play a role in helping to make Caledon roads safer. And, let's face it, we also need people to learn how to drive their damn cars properly! While it's tempting to blame all of our ills on a few bad actors in the trucking industry, there are equally as many motor vehicle operators who have no business being behind the wheels of a car.

Incidents recently in the news highlight this latter issue. A five-times convicted, three times lifetime ban on driving impaired driver was let out on bail after causing irreparable harm to local resident Gabriel Arshad. In another matter, the same person who sideswiped Premier Doug Ford's vehicle earlier this year was behind the wheel when his car slammed into another head-on, causing the death of a father of three whose wife is battling stage four cancer. That driver, Jaiwan Victor Kirubananthan, aged 18, has been charged with dangerous driving causing death and dangerous driving causing bodily harm in this most recent accident and with dangerous operation of a motor vehicle in connection with the accident involving Premier Ford.

Why was this individual even on the road after the first incident?

In another matter before the courts recently, a Superior Court Justice attempted to rectify a decision that allowed driver Joseph LeClaire, impaired by fentanyl (his fourth such conviction) to walk free. Reviewing an appeal of an incident that bears an eerie resemblance to the facts of the driver involved in the Arshad accident, SC Justice Jennifer Woolcombe called it an affront to the administration of justice for a judge to choose to knowingly disregard and decline to follow the law that must be applied. As a

result, her response to that appeal was to impose a mandatory four-month jail sentence on LeClaire. In doing so, she acknowledged the four-time convicted LeClaire, who was also under a ?driving prohibition at the time of his arrest,? was receiving in her view, ?an extremely lenient sentence? but one that the criminal code requires as a ?minimum sentence ? for a third and successive impaired driving offense.? At least one bad driver will see some jail time but one wonders, how many times are bad drivers, including those under lifetime driving bans, going to be allowed to escape the consequences of their actions? At this point, I think it's safe to infer that bad drivers keep driving badly at least in part because the consequences of doing so are negligible.

The octopus in the room just keeps growing more tentacles. Groups like the CCRSA, local resident associations, and the Town of Caledon and its municipal and elected representatives must work together to advocate for change. We need the Ministry of Transportation, the Region of Peel, the Government of Ontario and the justice system to do better. Bail reform, stricter truck driver training and licensing and perhaps even the involvement of the Federal government, are all required to even begin the process of making real, lasting and meaningful change to the issues impacting road safety here in Caledon and across the province.

The CCRSA has the right idea though ? ?we're all in this together? because the lasting consequences of our failure to work together for change impacts us all.