

What Price Progress?

by SHERALYN ROMAN

There is a lot going on in Caledon right now and I'm not talking about COVID outbreaks in local warehouses. Rather, I'm talking about construction, plans for more construction, plans for a highway (possibly) and so many more plans, plans, plans. Caledon is poised for massive growth over the next 20-30 years and while progress can be good, what comes with it is a whole lot of other 'Ps' like population, pollution and possibly even paving over sensitive environmental areas. It's a conundrum not necessarily unique to Caledon but Caledon itself is particularly unique and therefore our position a little more challenging than for some towns and cities. We have been known, at least colloquially for many years, as a 'Community of Communities' but now, whether growth is wanted or not that definition may be forced to change and I have to wonder what is the price of progress?

Driving west along Mayfield Road, it's hard to distinguish between Brampton and Caledon as you fight the traffic travelling via a single lane in each direction, across Mayfield Rd. Seeing farmland paved over is hard to take, and yet we do understand the provincially-mandated growth Caledon is expected to absorb. I wonder though, whom is paying for the infrastructure needed to support this growth? I continue to have faith that our own local Council will address issues as they arise and that our Future Caledon Master Plan has been carefully considered but here's the thing: right now 'trapped behind a dump truck, in turn trapped behind a farm vehicle and with houses to the left, farm fields straight ahead and barren fields about to be filled with homes on the right' the true disparity between our past and future Caledon has never been more evident.

Southfields is a lovely master planned community with a library and rec centre, a coffee shop, pharmacy and plaza and parks, but with only one main road leading in and out it's plagued by traffic issues. Also speeding drivers but that's not the Town's fault! Valleywood also has only one way in and out so when the highway is closed for an accident, good luck getting home, or getting out of the neighbourhood. With the potential of another highway just north of the community, Valleywood might just become like that John Cougar Mellencamp song with 'an interstate runnin' through (the) front yard.'

Residents in both Caledon East and Caledon Village have concerns about infill home construction taking place and the resulting impact on traffic patterns, road usage and safety.

We are known as a community of communities 'little villages and hamlets that are beautiful, stand alone and special, but which are more and more plagued by traffic' especially so on the weekends. How to manage the delicate balance of Caledon as a tourist destination while protecting those of us that live here? Belfountain comes to mind, of course, but even many of our other roads are becoming overrun. When things open up again, expect Alton to be feeling the same pinch Belfountain did, if not with speed and winding roads, certainly at least with parking challenges.

As for the potential addition of another 400 series highway it's a bit like an open wound that partially heals, only to be ripped open and start festering again. First on the table, then off the table, next subject to an environmental assessment and now (allegedly) in the hands of the Feds, we're left with no clear direction on whether this massive, costly undertaking is necessary, whether it will cause ecological harm and/or lead to the extinction of some wildlife. Without a degree in engineering, economics or environmental science I probably shouldn't comment on the necessity and impact of such a highway, but from the perspective of a taxpayer, a commuter and a Caledon resident I will say that I believe it to be unnecessary.

Make better use of the often barren (or at least lightly travelled) 400-series highway just 15 kms to the south of us (the 407) for travel east and west and focus instead on enhancing various northbound/southbound routes on the opposite sides of Caledon. The 407 runs for far longer than the proposed 50 kms of the 413 and is 'underutilized' at best. If any traffic needs help (and to me, this includes transit riders) may I suggest on the west side why not widen Hwy 10 running north to Orangeville, Shelburne and beyond (or simply 'extend' the 410) and on the east side, enhance the use of Coleraine and Emil Kolb Parkway still further and build out the #427 to all points northward? This would help to reduce traffic on Hwy#50 through Bolton and beyond and might even have a positive impact on the continued enhancement of Bolton's downtown core.

We all know (whether we like it or not) that growth is needed and has been mandated but at what cost? We are potentially losing the flavour of our Town as a 'Community of Communities,' with only Cheltenham and Belfountain remaining largely untouched at this point but for how much longer? We're at a challenging point in our history, relying on Council to manage the delicate balance of growth while respecting the heritage and integrity of each of our little villages and hamlets. I have faith they're up for the challenge but I sure don't envy them. It's a conundrum indeed.