

What'd I miss?

by SHERALYN ROMAN

In either good news or bad news, depending on your point of view, 'I'm Back!' Speaking of news, did I miss anything while I was gone? If you've been tracking current events in Caledon and the surrounding area, the answer of course is a resounding 'YES.' Not only did I miss a thing or two, but for a curmudgeonly columnist like me, I seem to have missed one of the most tumultuous times Caledon has experienced in recent history and that's saying something!

In case you too missed the 'goings on' around town, here's just a short recap in no particular order:

Using strong Mayor powers, Annette Groves tried to push through 12, count 'em, 12 MZOs! In response to said actions, a citizens' uprising of sorts occurred and residents from across Caledon rallied together under the banner Democracy Caledon. An impressive display of democracy in action indeed! Not long after a lengthy Council meeting on the topic, ending at around 2 a.m., the Mayor then posted a brief announcement on social media saying she had 'heard' the people of Caledon and would be reconsidering her proposed MZOs. I briefly considered this a 'mea culpa' on her part, but as it turns out, in what I'm sure was just a simple coincidence, her announcement came just hours before a letter she had just received was made public. Coming from Housing Minister Paul Calendra, the letter sternly 'advised' Mayor Groves that a number of her MZO proposals somehow interfered with the Highway 413 proposal and should be removed from consideration. With community 'information sessions' about these zoning decisions taking place across Caledon, this is a story that won't be going away for a little while yet.

Speaking of Highway 413, there was that hastily arranged presser a couple of weeks ago where Mr. Ford appeared alongside Brampton Mayor Patrick Brown. Visibly absent were representatives from Caledon. Standing in front of a 'crowd' of people wearing vests and hard hats, Ford announced that shovels would be in the ground, building the highway to nowhere (my words, not his) by 2025. He no doubt felt emboldened to do so thinking he'd won a battle against the Federal government's Impact Assessment Act.

Coincidence seems to have played a role here too. Ford's presser looked like an effort to pre-empt the news that according to the people at Environmental Defense, 'the Federal government can still fix the Impact Assessment Act and re-designate Highway 413 for new assessment,' as early as this spring, for ratification by fall 2024. So, there's still hope that Mr. Ford and his developer friends will be prevented from building a highway that will wipe out protected species, while decimating farmland and wetlands.

In other news, while the dissolution of Peel Region has been put on the backburner, discussions about downloading of services to the Town of Caledon continue. Like much of what seems to be happening around here lately however, most of those conversations are taking place behind closed doors and during confidential 'In Camera' sessions. Planning and development will likely form a significant portion of the downloaded services, becoming a Town of Caledon responsibility. This is concerning because only three Mayoral appointees sit on the transition committee, and one of those is the Mayor! That leaves, as one Councillor noted, 'The rest of us?' blind.' I'm not disparaging the two Councillors who are on the committee, but at this critical juncture in the future design and development of Caledon, and given the Mayor's recent track record on development proposals, leaving the rest of our democratically elected officials 'blind' to planning discussions is a blatant slap in the face to them, and to the Caledon residents who elected them. Perhaps you might defend the process by arguing that the minutes of these meetings are publicly available. In theory yes, but in a recent example of a meeting that took place on April 5, the bulk of the meeting minutes only reference 'a 'confidential verbal update' about the transition of planning services. A sceptic might wonder about such confidentiality when 12 separate MZOs were recently attempted. Which, I believe, brings me right back to where I started. Am I all caught up? Are you? I doubt it but now that I'm back, the conversation continues! Stay tuned.

By the way 'consider this a public service announcement.

In case you missed it, Democracy in Caledon's next public forum is taking place May 29, 6-9 p.m. at St. James Anglican Church

Hall in Caledon East. On May 27 and June 10, in Alton and Caledon East respectively, residents will have another opportunity to learn more about all the proposed housing developments in Caledon.

Granted these are events ?hosted? by the Town so the opportunity to be ?heard? is likely limited, but to become informed and educated about the difference between 13,000 and 35,000 homes being built and how the land for those homes will be zoned and whether developers will help pay for this development is all important.

I urge you to set aside an hour and come to learn more.