

Why you should care

by SHERALYN ROMAN

There is a 'thing' we know to be true, even though in conversation, many of us might deny it. That is, that while we 'treasure' and 'respect' our right to democracy, many of us don't practice what we preach. We talk about politics politely, using euphemisms to hide our political beliefs in mixed company, or alternatively, we argue so vociferously there is no room for compromise. But what many of us don't do, and what matters more than anything else, is VOTE.

Here is why you should care about voting, and some of the hot button issues impacting Caledon right now.

Conversations I've had recently include: 'What's the difference between a blasting quarry and a regular quarry,' or 'Why bother voting? It doesn't make a difference anyway,' and worse still, 'They're all crooked.' There have also been concerns expressed that some members of the current Council aren't just being stone-walled at every vote, but excluded regularly from the kinds of conversations that all duly elected Council members (acting on behalf of us voters) should collectively be a part of. Not only does voting matter, but those we vote for must be able to do their jobs! All of these conversations concern me because they could mean any number of things, most of them not good.

Caledon residents, like those in Ward One for example, should know and understand the difference between a blasting quarry and a 'regular' pit or quarry because the difference isn't just about increased truck traffic on the roads, dangerous though that might be, but rather, also has to do with the long term potentially detrimental impacts to our groundwater both here and downstream. A blasting quarry, such as that proposed by CBM Votorantim, is a below the water table proposal that risks contaminating at least 25% of local residents their drinking water and that's a very conservative estimate. Keep in mind too that once water is contaminated (or a well disappears) it's almost impossible to reverse course.

Contamination of the Credit River and of a key Brook Trout spawning area is also at risk. The actual hole in the ground will be as deep as the equivalent of an eight-storey building, the kind of lasting damage you can never rehabilitate. So, why should you care? Because we all rely on water, whether we live beside the quarry or downstream. We all travel area roads. The estimated additional 75 trucks per hour (during peak times) will be sharing them with us and we all know that illegal trucking and inadequate training are also hot button issues right now and if you don't, (and it's becoming increasingly clear many don't) you should. It's not just Ward One either. Groups like the CCRSA, the Forks of the Credit Preservation Group and Democracy Caledon all exist to help bring awareness and attention to issues impacting all Caledon residents. Bolton is a disaster in the making. The Mayfield West community doesn't even have a park for their children to play in and they've been living here for over five years! BUT, ultimately, it's our responsibility as voters to learn about these issues - to get informed - and then use that information to make the best possible decision during the upcoming municipal election.

For those that say, 'Why bother voting?', there are a myriad of examples we can look to as proof of its importance, not the least of which is the number of Democrats to the south of us who never thought it possible a former TV 'reality' show host would be their real-life President.

Closer to home in the last federal election ridings were decided in some cases by fewer than 15 votes (just 12 in one Newfoundland riding, 'the closest margin of victory of any riding race in Canada.'). Just down the road from us in Milton, a riding was decided by 21 votes while in Terrebonne, Quebec, after a judicial recount, just one vote separated the candidates, resulting in a Supreme Court decision to annul the results and hold a by-election. So yes, every vote matters and you have the democratic right and the freedom to vote, as preserved for us through the literal blood of veterans, so why wouldn't you?

As for the comment, 'they're all crooked anyway,' they are not. I know I do my fair share of griping here. It's hard not to when Premier Ford shuts down the legislature for 20+ weeks after only sitting for a total of 30 days! Who wouldn't like a job like that? But it doesn't mean that everyone in the legislature is crooked. Particularly at the municipal level I don't think there's a harder working

group (generally speaking) of people who, for the most part, enter into the political fray to help make their own community a better place to live, work and play. It's a job that involves nights, weekends, hundreds of community events, grand openings and Council meetings that stretch into the wee hours, not to mention calls from irate residents at all hours of the day and night.

Those who step forward conscientiously deserve our praise for even considering the task. But, what I am seeing more and more of lately is a reluctance by well-meaning, hard-working local citizens to step up to serve their community and much of that has to do with the attitudes of those who don't. Antagonism and outright vitriol on social media, lies and threats both overt and underhanded, intimidation and more, all make this a concerning time to be a politician. Those who do throw their name into the ring must have a very thick skin indeed. It might help if collectively, we applauded their efforts and used our 'voice' at the ballot box, instead of on a social media laden small screen. It's the only way those that are truly hoping to work in the best interests of our community will get the chance to do so. The candidates are out there campaigning. Ask them questions when they knock on your door. Do your research. This is OUR community and only WE can make a difference but WE have to work together to ensure OUR voices are heard. We all live, work and play here and that's why YOU should care.