

Lest we forget



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By Nate Smelle

DEMOCRACY is not a word to be taken lightly. When striving for the best community and world possible, it is however, something that each and every person needs to handle with careful thought and great care.

Over the duration of the summer I've noticed the number of letters to the editor increase. In the past few weeks, I have also noticed that these numbers have been climbing substantially.

As the journalist and a community member, this rising level of civic engagement gives me hope for the future. By taking the time to sit down, confront one's own thoughts and beliefs, draft a letter and send it in, no matter what one's opinion is, it shows that individual is willing to initiate and participate in a conversation which they hope will make the community a better place to live from their point of view.

It also reveals to me that they see value in educating the public about issues that could be a threat to our health, well-being and democracy itself.

Having not heard anything about the proposed Freymond quarry for quite some time, it was a series of letters to the editors that recently informed me about an upcoming public meeting regarding the controversial proposal on Sunday, Sept. 30 starting at 1 p.m. at the Faraday Community Centre. Whether deciding to permit a mining project in Limerick, a quarry in Faraday, or raising the wastewater rates in Bancroft, the community always needs to be consulted, heard, and followed.

As the Chinese philosopher and sage Lao Tzu said, 'If you want to govern the people, you must place yourself below them. If you want to lead the people, you must learn how to follow them.'

Considering we are currently in the middle of a municipal election, and part way through what is recognized as Legion Week in Ontario, I cannot help but think how many people have died fighting to protect the democratic rights and freedoms that our politicians, and political structure is intended to uphold. Though it is easy to take these hard-fought fundamental elements of our way of life in Canada for granted, we need to honour the deadly cost of them through our own civic engagement.

Lest we forget the words of Robert Kennedy who once said, 'Elections remind us not only of the rights but the responsibilities of citizenship in a democracy.'

Although we are still more than a month away from Remembrance Day, we cannot afford to continue turning a blind eye to politicians and institutions that take advantage of our democratic rights for their own monetary gain, when so many people gave their lives to earn and defend them. Our ancestors did not fight off the fascists in Nazi Germany because they wanted to protect the right of an individual or an institution to impose its will on the people. In fact, as are our Legions in Canada do such an effective job of reminding us each year, that is exactly what they were fighting against.

Luckily for us, every four years we have the opportunity to employ our own notwithstanding clause and say yes to the type of community and world we desire, by simply casting a vote for the person who will continue this ongoing fight for our democratic

rights.

With Ontario's municipal election fast approaching, now is the time to remind ourselves of how well our incumbent representatives have served us over the past term. It is also a good time to immerse ourselves in the facts, write letters to the editor, and educate one another about who we plan to vote for and why. Who we vote for to represent us not only reflects who we are as individuals, it also helps to define what we value as human beings.

Such an important decision should be a matter of pride, not shame.