

A citizen's cry for action

Last June, I responded to a Notice of Decision from the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) as to the erection of a parking lot on Olde Base Line Road just east of the Cheltenham Badlands.

I asked whether they had considered the safety of the residents when this decision was made. I also asked whether there was consideration given in regard to those who live close to the site as to the impact the masses of visitors have on them and their property.

My other query was whether the community was involved in this decision. One of my major concerns was, and still is, the preservation of this incredible, geological site which truly is a heritage from which we all have a lot to learn. Did you know that the bedrock you stand on at the site is 4.5 million years old and due to eroding factors we now witness the hills and gullies we see today? Interestingly enough, it has eroded more than three metres, and human impact is the most significant factor contributing to this devastation.

Anyone who has travelled Olde Base Line Road knows how dangerous it is at the best of times, with its roller coaster effect and lack of sightlines. We all live in fear that an accident will happen, taking once again one of our loved ones.

Statistics tell us that the Monday of Thanksgiving weekend in 2013, there were 995 cars counted along the road in front of the exposed part of this site. Private tour companies are touting this as a destination point. Buses and cars arrive in droves.

Olde Base Line is the direct line from Inglewood for fire trucks and first responders to all the residents who live to the north as far west as Winston Churchill Boulevard, north to the Escarpment and out to Highway 10. Our emergency needs are at risk when this road is impeded in any way, not to mention how much the safety of our visitors is at risk when people are double parked and make u-turns along with three-point turns right in the middle of the road.

My letter to NEC has garnered support and now we are advocating for three basic principles: Public safety for the visitors to the site and for the residents of surrounding community; preservation of the site; and finally community involvement.

No one knows what the final picture will look like, but we do know that action is needed. We have watched this situation grow out of control. Is it time to close the site for everyone's sake and take the time to think through this dilemma until a complete and comprehensive plan can be effected?

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