

Bill Rea ? Construction?s a summer pain

Well, it looks like summer, as strange as it might have been, has given way to the type of weather we normally expect in fall, and right around the time when we should be preparing for winter.

I write these words as I sit on the back deck of my home, composing with one eye, and watching the progress of the dinner I am barbecuing. My wife has taken stock of the weather and announced this will be the last barbecuing session of the season. I think the fact that we have also run out of hamburger buns has had a lot to do with Beth's decision.

Actually, she changed her mind and had me barbecue Sunday. Good thing i'm good at it.

And as we face the end of the summer season, I am hopeful we are at, or at least close, to the end of the road construction season too. It's been a real pain this year.

I have my share of complaints over the detours I have had to take to get to places around town. King Street has been a nightmare at times. The main reason it annoys me is I rely on King to get to and from work. Being the smart fellow I like to think I am, I know when it's time to divert, and where to go. The problem is there are a lot of other smart people like me out there, meaning Healey Road has often been jammed. It hasn't been so bad for the morning commutes, but there have been times trying to get home at supper time when I have been flipping coins in my head as to which route take.

And I am eagerly looking forward to seeing all of Old Church Road opened to traffic. How many people realize, I wonder, that Old Church is the most effective direct route between Bolton and Caledon East because there are no trains to get in the way. I've been inconvenienced by them a lot over the last couple of months.

Okay, that's the end of my rant.

I do know that trains are vehicles too, and their movement is very crucial to the economy, both locally and beyond. And I also appreciate that roads need to be kept in good repair, which means closing them at times for a time so the necessary work can be done. And there are restrictions on what kind of work can be done and where and how much. Locally, the people who call those shots have to be mindful of where the money is coming from to pay for it all, and also be aware the source of that funding, namely the taxpayer, will only stand for so much.

That's one of the reasons why I prefer being a guy who gets to criticize politicians, rather than actually be one. Besides, who in their right mind would vote for a guy like me? I'm not sure I would.

Besides, no matter how bad things might be around here, I have learned the hard way that they have been a lot worse in Toronto.

I had to drive to the big Megacity Saturday on work-related business, namely to check out the annual Royal Agricultural Winter Fair. The Fair is held at the CNE grounds, in the west end, which is where I spent the first several years of my life. Thus I know the area well, know the best routes to take, and can even find places where parking is pretty cheap. And I was a little surprised at how easy the drive was. I encountered some construction, but it represented little more than a minor inconvenience. Getting out of there at the end of the day was even easier.

But all that represented was the fact things do change, because such was not the case during September and much of October.

Matters of a largely personal nature have required me to drive to Toronto a lot since Labour Day. There was a family reunion, and since both my late parents died in the month of October, I usually make a point of visiting the cemetery at that time of year. And there were a number of other matters that drew me south.

A number of those occasions presented a real adventure.

Granted, several of those trips involved driving south on Highway 427 early in the evening, at a time in the year when the Blue Jays were still playing, meaning the road was jammed. As well, I was responding to the demands of certain time lines, meaning these delays were especially annoying. And yes, for subsequent trips, I did leave myself more time, not that that helped a lot.

As I stated above, I am familiar with the megacity. There was one evening when I got off the 427 at Eglinton Avenue, went east to Kipling and connected with the Kingsway to get myself in the vicinity of where I was headed. It worked once, but the second time I tried it, I found the crucial stretch of Eglinton was blocked. Martin Grove sort of proved to be a useful alternative. Another trip had me taking the 427 to the 409 to the 401 (part of the route I used to take to get to work 20 years ago). I got off at Weston Road to get into the city, and encountered plenty of delays because of one construction project or another.

I learned the hard way that there is no easy way to get around there.

I once lived in that city. I have family, including my brother and cousins, who still live there. Both my parents called it home all of their lives, as did my maternal grandparents. But things have reached the point that driving there is a major ordeal.

I guess that makes me appreciate the fact that conditions in Caledon haven't been that bad after all.