

But first, traffic?

by SHERALYN ROMAN

It seems that lately, I've been talking a lot about infrastructure. Of course, as a layperson, I am no expert on the topic. Sometimes however, and I have my own personal experiences to support this, an expert is not what's needed to bring attention to a particular issue but rather, the collective ?us? is what matters. It's the ?us? (the people) who are occasionally able to apply a lens of common sense to the issues which impact us daily. Today, I'm talking to you Southfields residents. It's time to loudly, but appropriately, advocate for the application of common sense to be applied where traffic in your community is concerned.

Living in the southern portion of Caledon has become somewhat of a nightmare. Traffic is horrendous - there is simply no other word for it. Infrastructure, poor planning, and questionable decision-making are to blame and while it has certainly landed in the lap of the current Council and administration to resolve, it has been years in the making. Regardless, lives are at stake and the time for action was long before Southfields (and Caledon's Anthem community too) was even built. If indeed the southern end of Caledon was a ?master-planned community? then it's time to actually ensure those plans, particularly road infrastructure, are actioned.

It is not enough for the current Council to say they are advocating on behalf of residents. It is not enough to do yet more traffic studies. We know that Southfields was planned to have more than one entry/exit point. Technically, at the moment, it has two, but that's only because Kennedy Road runs north/south so technically another exit exists. However, the northern exit is only one lane, requires navigating a roundabout, passing a school (where absolutely no one maintains the speed limit) and simply dumps residents onto a single lane, country road ill-equipped for the volume. There is no way to leave the subdivision from the east or west and the kicker? Now that the subdivision also includes several large warehouses, facilities that will no doubt rely upon increased truck traffic to support their existence, the traffic will absolutely ONLY GET WORSE.

Sold by at least one developer in their marketing materials as an opportunity to ?Escape the hustle and bustle of the big city and find solace in the suburban-country oasis of Southfields, Caledon,? instead it is also now home to warehousing facilities that are being advertised as having easy access to Mayfield Rd. and the nearby 410 highway. Nothing could be further from the truth. The road on which these warehouses exist is a dead end in one direction and the other leads potential truck traffic directly toward the already astonishingly busy Kennedy Road ? currently the only way in and out of this neighbourhood of thousands of homes. Adding to the mayhem, the main intersection at Kennedy and Mayfield Road has been under construction FOREVER. It's not just an accident waiting to happen, they've already happened - multiple times - and no doubt will continue to happen but with increasingly tragic consequences as we add transport trucks to the mayhem.

So, about that infrastructure I mentioned earlier. If in fact these communities were ?master-planned? years ago and those plans included multiple entry/exit points, you cannot now, in good conscience, continue to cite poor planning as a reason to support delay after delay after delay. You cannot collect the taxes of both the residents and the corporate citizens that you encouraged to flock to this area by building homes and warehouses right next to one another and then not spend some of that money on infrastructure to adequately support and keep those residents safe. You cannot continue to blame other levels of government without taking any meaningful action. You cannot continue to suggest the roads are a regional responsibility, unless of course once we are no longer part of the region you plan to immediately rectify the situation and build out the road to Heart Lake Road. Finally, and residents, some of this is on you as well, it's time to get loud, get angry, and to advocate for your right to safe access to your homes and businesses.

But here's the thing. Use social media as a tool not just as a keyboard warrior. Call, write, email, and visit the offices of the people who SHOULD be helping you and then do it all again, and again and again. Get in contact with your area councillor, your Regional Councillor, the Mayor, the Transportation Minister, our MPP. Use social media to coordinate a community wide campaign and strike a committee of the Southfields Residents Group who will specifically advocate and work with all of the parties just mentioned in order to effect change. Don't just ask for meetings, plan them and expect attendance from the folks running our community. Apply enough pressure and they'll advocate for you higher up the chain. Sure, they might already be doing it but press harder. Go ahead

and protest at the ONE main intersection you have in your community and call the media to cover the event. In addition to your own concerns about home and safety, there are three schools, one community centre and library, and one seniors residence in Southfields meaning students, seniors and young children are all at risk.

The voices of many carry weight but only if they are organized, have done their homework, speak with one voice and advocate for change with a common sense attitude that's focussed on an end goal based on safety for all, not simply on complaints about what's not working. How do I know this? Because other communities in south Caledon have been in your shoes. Don't wait until there's a near tragedy involving a car full of teenagers, a flipped vehicle that burst into flames and a terrible bridge with inadequate signage to do something about it. The solutions might not be perfect but they'll be better than now.