

Caledon Carnage Continues

by SHERALYN ROMAN

If you're a Caledon resident who made it through the holidays unscathed by the chaos and carnage that Caledon roads are right now, Happy New Year. To everyone else, including the families of residents who were injured or worse, I extend my sincerest condolences. More than anything, what these past few weeks have shown us is that the time to do something about safety on Caledon's roads was ten years ago. So, the next best time to do something about them is now. It won't be an easy task.

Since the saying 'money talks' is not just a saying but actually true, let's start with our budget. Caledon residents have been invited to have their say in upcoming budget deliberations. The Town is 'preparing the 2024 Budget to align with our new Strategic Plan which prioritizes sustainable growth, connected communities (and) improved service.' That means it is time for residents to say 'enough is enough' when it comes to playing with our lives and advocate strongly for improved road safety by voicing your concerns on where and how to allocate spending as part of the budgeting process.

It's time to demand that our elected officials, and various planning departments, complete a deep dive into looking at what municipal resources are available to work together with our regional and provincial partners to make significant safety changes at both intersections that have been identified as problematic (hello, Kennedy Rd. at Mayfield, and also Old School Rd. at Highway 10) and across the full length of Mayfield Rd. west of Highway 10, as well as ALL of Highway 10 northbound from Valleywood Blvd. through to Caledon Village and beyond.

In addition to having your say via the Town's online survey portal, this is a battle that needs to be escalated further. The Minister of Transportation, who has ties to the Brampton/Caledon and Orangeville communities, our MPP Sylvia Jones, who surely traverses these dangerous corridors herself on a regular basis and, perhaps even (as we've seen community members suggest) the Attorney General, the OPP and the provincial courts must all be solicited.

Traffic in Caledon is not just a Caledon problem. Instead, it's a symptom of systemic failures across a broad spectrum of issues that include: abysmal infrastructure planning, resulting in thousands of new homes added to the south end of Caledon without ANY accompanying increase in road capacity.

It includes a complete lack of public transportation necessitating a reliance on vehicles, again well beyond our capacity to accommodate them.

Also contributing to increased traffic on local roads (and to parking, snow removal problems and other issues) are unaffordable homes that force homeowners to rent out basements and bedrooms, resulting in increased vehicle volume on both area side streets and main roads.

Locally, the preponderance of large warehousing operations that rely on multiple shifts and tired, overworked shift workers to get the work done must also assume some of the responsibility for the impact that demanding working conditions might have on one's ability to drive home safely on congested roadways. That also, as a result of this same situation, together with a plethora of local gravel pits, Caledon experiences an enormous volume of truck traffic on roads ill-equipped to handle them, is simply the icing on the cake when it comes to amping up the significant risk factors facing every Caledon resident who travels on our roads.

There's another saying about money that seems to apply here and that is, 'money is the root of all evil.' Perhaps that sounds extreme, but in our relentless drive to build more, consume more, own more? maybe it's also commercialism that's killing us.

Lest the column thus far leads you to believe I am placing blame on everyone BUT the operators of motor vehicles, rest assured I am not. There have long been idiots on the roads and now there are simply many, many more of them. People ARE driving too fast. People ARE engaging in ridiculous behaviours such as passing on the left (using the middle turn lane on Highway 10) and making

U-turns anywhere and everywhere, all the damn time.

I'm sure we all read in horror of the newly licensed G2 driver (and by new, I mean just literally 25 minutes after they received it) allegedly caught stunt driving with an open beer in hand! For most of us, the sheer audacity to believe that even contemplating such a thing is astounding, never mind actually doing it! The OPP recently shared that in just six weeks of R.I.D.E. programs in our area, over 1,300 people were charged with impaired driving. How is that even possible? Such flagrant disregard for the rules of the road are hard to believe and harder still to manage but managed they must be. It means not just tougher laws for impaired driving, stunt driving, speeding and other infractions, but also that those laws are enforced by an adequate number of uniformed officers on our roads (staffing) and that charges are upheld when heard in court (staffing, stiffer penalties, jail time etc.), all of which takes ? you guessed it ? more money.

It's time to take back our roads from the chaos and carnage that is occurring daily. Too many families have been impacted, especially in just these past few weeks. There are some measures we can take now that will have an immediate impact like speed bumps on some high-risk residential roads. Stop saying it can't be done because it's being done in communities all around us and it has had an impact on slowing vehicles down without negatively impacting emergency services.

Advanced green lights for left-turning vehicles at problematic intersections will help, along with adjusting the timing of those lights, and posting advance flashing lights and other signage before these same intersections will also help.

Divided highways aren't always the ?popular? option but they are often a necessary one and they would help to address so many issues.

We need fearless politicians who are ready to take on the challenge of implementing unpopular but necessary road safety changes. We need fearless politicians who are willing to vote on increasing budget allocations to roads and maintenance infrastructure and fearless politicians who will vote to enhance police budgets and allocate resources to courts that will actually enforce the rules of the road. Most of all, we need all of these politicians to work together at the municipal, regional and provincial levels to have a meaningful impact.

The Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) conference is happening at the end of January. Over 1,000 of your colleagues will be there, Mayor Groves and Caledon Councillors.

Some of you are already advocating for us and we thank you, but this chaos and carnage requires each and every one of your concerted efforts.

Please start talking about our traffic troubles to anyone who will listen. Caledon lives depend on it.