

Caledon East parents don't want their kids to lose school bus

By Bill Rea

Some students at Caledon East Public School are in line to lose their bus rides next year, and that's not sitting well with parents. A group of them took their concerns to the Peel District School Board last Tuesday evening. Trustees were sympathetic, and said the matter will be discussed at their next meeting, set for May 28.

Local parent Adam Martin-Robbins reported he was told by Student Transportation of Peel Region (STOPR), the consortium that decides busing eligibility issues for Peel's two school boards, that busing would be cancelled for students living north of Larry Street and east of Airport Road in Caledon East.

He arrived at Tuesday's meeting armed with a petition bearing 283 signatures, pointing out the students have been bused for more than 25 years.

The petition was read by Trustee Stan Cameron. It stated there are concerns about youngsters having to walk up a busy street like Airport Road, and then along side streets to get to school. He pointed out some of these streets don't even have sidewalks. The safety concerns include the volume of traffic, including heavy trucks, and the fact that two girls have been struck and killed along the road over the last several years.

Martin-Robbins told trustees he's got two daughters attending the school, and two younger children.

He added that for children living north of Larry Street, Airport Road is really the only route they can take. The Caledon Trailway is often unpassable in winter.

He also pointed out there's only one set of traffic lights in the village (at Old Church Road). He also said there are more than 10,000 vehicles passing through per day, including heavy trucks, tractor trailers and buses. As well, Martin-Robbins pointed out the peak traffic times are 6 to 9 a.m. and 3 to 6 p.m., just when youngsters are walking to and from school. And he expected things to get busier as the population in the area increases.

"Airport Road is a dangerous road," he declared, adding Caledon OPP has designated it as one of their "hot spots."

He also pointed out there are problems with the sightlines in the area, and the sidewalks along Airport Road are lacking when it comes to curbs. He said it wouldn't take much for a truck to jump on the sidewalk.

The intersection at Old Church Road presents problems too. Martin-Robbins pointed out it's a busy place, with the LCBO store parking lot very close by.

"It's an extremely confusing intersection, even for those who have lived there for years," he commented, adding cars have been known to use on-street parking areas as passing lanes.

Martin-Robbins told Brampton Trustee Steve Kavanagh speed is a factor in the area, as heavy trucks often have to "gun it" to get up the hill.

Kavanagh told him that he doesn't see that in his area of Brampton because it's been designated a no-trucking zone.

"The safety of roads is the responsibility of municipal government," he added.

Martin-Robbins pointed out there are a limited number of haul routes for gravel trucks in Caledon.

"It's not my problem, sir," Kavanagh replied. "It's the Town's problem."

Getting trucks off the road is not going to happen any time soon, according to Caledon Councillor Richard Whitehead.

He told the Citizen this week that Airport Road is the only haul route in the area, and that's not going to change.

And he wasn't too impressed with cutting back on the busing.

"I think that's ridiculous," he commented. "I just think it's incredibly short-sighted."

Martin-Robbins told Brampton Trustee David Green the only reason he's aware of for cutting back the service is the Town's plan to put a crossing guard at the intersection with Old Church Road.

"It's not unique to Caledon," Brampton Trustee Beryl Ford observed, pointing out Airport Road runs through her ward too. And that's not the only road that's a concern. "Dixie (Road) is a race track," she remarked.