

Dear Minister of Transportation

by SHERALYN ROMAN

The carnage on our roads continues unabated. The visuals of helicopters landing on Highway 10 seemingly on the news at least once a week and the almost daily Facebook notifications: "avoid Highway 10 at Olde Base," or "Highway 10 closed at Charleston," and "looks like a bad accident, praying for all involved," are relentless. I get it, Mr. Sarkaria. No doubt you'll comment along the lines of, "We can't fix bad drivers," and you're right, we can't. You know what we CAN fix? Bad roads! And Highway 10, running from just north of Mayfield Road through to Orangeville and beyond is a very, very bad road. Dear Minister of Transportation, welcome to the Transportation portfolio. You've inherited a crisis and the time for talking is done, the time for action is now.

The residents who live, work and commute along Highway 10 include Caledon, Brampton, Orangeville, Shelburne and all points in between. We number in the hundreds of thousands. Taxpayers, who simply want to go about our lives, safely or at the very least, as safely as possible. I acknowledge many factors impact traffic volume, some of which you can't control, like soaring housing costs that push people further and further away from their workplaces, or both the existing, and proposed, quarries that result in significant, heavily loaded gravel trucks "sharing" space with commuters. Add to that an appalling lack of public transportation (GO Transit, I'm talking to you) and yet more people are forced into driving vehicles because there's no easy and reliable way for them to commute otherwise. But again, there is something you CAN control and that's the design of the road itself. Put the proposed Highway 413 on the backburner where it rightly belongs and focus instead on fixing the roads already in existence. Because the very existence of some residents is at risk daily and for far too many, has been snuffed out completely.

Minister Sarkaria, you grew up in Brampton and it appears you are quite familiar with Orangeville, too. No doubt you've frequently traveled Highway 10 and surely you must acknowledge the significant population and density growth of the area. As a result, collisions have escalated exponentially. Under former Transportation Minister Caroline Mulroney, our hard-working local Caledon Council member Lynn Kiernan fought long and hard for a review of the Highway 10 corridor to be undertaken, and Orangeville Council has also chimed in with their support. It has been promised and that's good news but I'm asking you today, to not only make sure this promise comes to fruition but that you ensure it happens pronto. As in yesterday. As in this should have been done five years ago, maybe even 10, so let's not delay it another moment.

Finally, Minister Sarkaria, while we often (and rightly so) rely on experts to inform our decisions, let's not turn this into a massive, time-consuming undertaking. Let's learn from those who have already done the work both here and across the US. It has been proven over and over again that median barriers "significantly reduce the severity of cross-median crashes." It's been proven that median barrier systems "reduce collision severity." Median barrier options range from cable, to guard rails to concrete barriers, meaning there are options that are effective and affordable. Rumble strips are an even easier tool and did you know research suggests installing centre line rumble strips in some areas led to "a reduction of up to 64% of head-on, sideswipe and opposite direction crashes" the likes of which are what we often see on Highway 10. Seems like a pretty simple, affordable approach to traffic calming that could take place immediately, while your new team continues to investigate other measures.

No one likes a complainer. Minister Sarkaria, I'm complaining, yes, but I'm offering solutions for your consideration too. Much research already exists that points to a variety of mitigating factors to control traffic that won't cost billions of dollars. Consider high friction surface treatments on curves to slow vehicles down, or installing controlled-contrast backplates on all traffic signals. These are signal heads that have backplates equipped with "retroreflective borders" that enhance visibility under all weather conditions, both day and night. As an added bonus, "this countermeasure is also advantageous during periods of power outages when the signals would otherwise be dark, providing a visible cue for motorists." Still aiming to keep costs low? Make sure your traffic studies review yellow-light timing at all signaled intersections and review those findings regularly (and during actual peak traffic times.) I'm a realist, Minister Sarkaria and I know we can't fix bad drivers but surely you must agree we CAN fix bad roads. It is sadly too late for so many local residents but you sir, have the ability to make a difference and make Highway 10 safer for those of us who rely on it daily. On behalf of all residents, I urge you to do so - and the time is now!