

Mayor Morrison's suggestion ? Airport Road eyed to honour veterans

By Bill Rea

There's still has to be considerable consultation, but Peel Region staff is looking at designating Airport Road as a memorial highway to honour veterans and peacekeepers.

The idea was put forth last month by Mayor Marolyn Morrison, and Regional staff made a brief presentation at last week's council meeting.

Morrison, who has two sons in the military who have done tours in Afghanistan, was not at last week's meeting, but she said she was pleased to see things progressing. In fact, she said there are going to be discussions with officials in Dufferin and Simcoe Counties to see about extending the designation of the road to the north.

Although the plan is to apply the special designation to the road, Morrison said she understood there are no plans to change the official name, meaning people on the road won't be obliged to change their mailing addresses.

?'It's not going to change the name from Airport Road,' she stressed. 'It's just going to be the Veterans' Memorial Highway.'

She added it will be basically the same concept as The Highway of Heroes, which comprises a stretch of Highway 401.

Morrison said she thought for a while about having the designation applied to the soon to be completed Bolton Arterial Road. But the Region has already decided to name a section of the road after Regional Chair and CEO Emil Kolb.

'I didn't want to take that away from him,' she said, adding the Airport Road idea is better.

In his presentation last week to Regional council, Public Works Commissioner Dan Labrecque commented that the request he received from Morrison was that this involve a road that runs through Caledon, as well as Brampton and Mississauga.

He also stressed this was not a simple issue, as it would 'affect the emotions of a lot of people.' He added there needs to be a thorough consultation process, including with officials of the Royal Canadian Legion, as well as other stakeholders.

Labrecque said the criteria for selecting such a road included it being an arterial with high visibility, as well as running through the three municipalities. Dixie Road and Mississauga Road were considered, but Airport Road was preferred, as he also pointed out it connects with the rest of the province to the north.

'Airport Road is it,' he declared.

There would also have to be a decision on whether the designation should apply to the whole road, or just sections. But he also stressed there will be no move to change the official name.

'Airport Road will always be Airport Road,' he said.

Labrecque also said there will have to be some discussion on whether there will be notable features to mark the road, such as gateways, monument, landscaping, signage or use of a Poppy logo (He said the Legion would have to be involved in discussions to use the Poppy).

As well, Labrecque warned this designation won't be coming into effect for a while. He estimated the summer or fall of 2015.

'Rushing it in two or three months is not feasible without upsetting important parts of the community,' he said.

Councillor Richard Whitehead pointed to the need to stress to people along the road they will not have to change their mailing addresses.

'I've been thinking about this for a long time,' Morrison commented earlier this week.

She added that at one point, there were 11 people who were either children or spouses of Caledon people going on tours in Afghanistan, as she called them 'just wonderful young men and women.'

'I just think that we should do something,' she said, adding the response she received from councillors when she raised the idea was very positive.

Morrison also said she realizes this isn't likely to be accomplished while she's still in office (she is not running in this year's elections), but she asked Labrecque to let her know when it's done and if there's to be some ceremony. She said she would like to bring the parents of Trooper Marc Diab, who was killed in 2009 in Afghanistan. Her son Brad was there at the time was one of Diab's pallbearers.