

Need a Jane Jacobs to fight Corridor

At the all candidates' meeting in Caledon East last fall, an audience member asked the mayoral and council aspirants their views on the GTA West Corridor.

To her chagrin, most either grudgingly spoke in favour or declined to criticize it. Included in that list was the person who is now mayor.

I share that lady's opposition and suggest it is time other Caledon residents woke up to this threat and started voicing their opposition as well.

This so-called corridor would be a 50-kilometre-long, four-to-six-lane highway which will rip through the heart of Caledon and, in the process, slash through farmlands, destroy or at least seriously degrade neighbourhoods, and uproot property owners ? some of whom are fourth-or-fifth-generation descendants of the original settlers.

Then there is the detrimental environmental impact on the small little headwater streams which feed into the West Humber, Etobicoke and Credit Rivers. All those rivers flow south, and are already compromised because of urbanization and tile drainage. The highway would further deprive those river systems of their lifeblood ? cold, clean groundwater.

Although the specific route has not been determined, the highway would extend from Highway 401 in Halton Region to Highway 400 in Vaughan and does not seem to serve any urban growth centres. An east-west corridor which bypasses Toronto already exists in the form of Highway 407.

The GTA West Corridor typifies old-style technology and old-style transportation planning. The estimated \$4 billion it would cost to build it would be better served on regional rapid transit and other investments in upgrading railway infrastructure so that more goods can be transported by rail.

It's ironic the Provincial government is pushing ahead with this project at the same time it is conducting a review of the Greenbelt. Recently, the Town of Caledon sent out letters to potentially impacted homeowners advising them, ?it is committed to open and transparent communications and advocating for increased transparency from the MTO (Ministry of Transportation) during the planning processes.?

Instead of open communications, the Town should be working to stop the GTA West. So should Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones, who frequently uses her newspaper columns to castigate the governing Liberals, but who has been strangely silent on this issue.

Stopping the GTA West Corridor is not far-fetched or impossible. Almost 45 years ago, opposition by urban affairs activist Jane Jacobs and other prominent Torontonians led to the cancellation of the Spadina Expressway by Premier William Davis.

It would appear Caledon now needs its own Jane Jacobs.

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