

On Traffic, Tims and Justice

by SHERALYN ROMAN

Traffic in Caledon is always a topic of conversation. Complaining about back-ups on Mayfield Road or trucks barrelling through villages is, much like the traffic itself, a daily constant on which we can rely. We cast about looking for ways to place blame and often of course, that blame lands squarely at the feet of the government. Occasionally that blame is warranted, and occasionally it's not. The truth is while we all play a role by driving safely and according to the rules of the road, we must also rely on our local and provincial governments to help and for regular police enforcement. In the absence of any of these, when accidents do happen, then we must also all work together toward justice.

This past week, yet again Highway 10 was the site of a grisly crash resulting in helicopters landing on the highway to rush victims to trauma centres. I wish I could say this is a rare sight but the highway, and in particular the stretch that spans the distance between Old Base Line and Charleston, has become a death trap of late. The reasons are myriad and are not, you might be surprised to hear me say this, solely the fault of the government. BUT, the government can and must play a role in addressing ongoing traffic safety concerns.

Sure, many drivers are idiots. I've lost count of how often I see a vehicle using the middle turn lane as their personal passing lane and there are some truck drivers who seem to have forgotten the laws of motion, driving too fast and forgetting the amount of time (and distance) required to stop their rigs. The OPP can patrol the road and do their best to curtail such activities but they cannot be in all places at all times. So, since we can't always rely on policing and we certainly can't fix 'stupid' - nor his close cousin, 'speed' - we have no choice but to also rely on the government to help address the mayhem.

Even at four lanes, this road is not equipped for handling the volume of traffic traversing it.

Gravel trucks in particular, with heavy loads and significantly increased volumes, are not meant to compete with the ever-increasing commuter traffic making their way north to Orangeville, Shelburne and beyond. Caledon Village was certainly never meant to handle this volume of traffic and reducing speeds to 50km/hr and changing traffic light patterns and turn lane signals has helped but not enough.

It's long past the time for us to start thinking creatively. A bypass perhaps. Increased safety measures like barriers/guardrails where possible and - dare I say it - perhaps looking at the continued extension of other northbound alternates such as the #42, all to help alleviate the pressures on Highway 10. Let's take a chunk of that money allocated to an east/west highway that is not needed and dedicate it instead to exploring how to get folks home safely - whether that's in Caledon or beyond our borders.

Related to traffic but only distantly so, a follow-up commentary on the Tim Horton's travesty in Caledon East. In a crowded Town Council meeting, a series of residents made well-researched, thoughtful and incisive comments on the dangers of a drive-thru restaurant location exiting onto Airport Road, just north of the LCBO. There was no 'NIMBYISM' I could detect in the comments. Rather, there was significant learning.

A Tim Hortons drive-thru relies on serving a customer every 25 seconds. There is only one planned entry/exit point. Two other businesses are also planned for the property. This alone is a recipe for disaster not if - but when - an accident occurs.

Mayor Groves raised concerns about Caledon's commitment to climate change.

Councillor Kiernan admonished Michael Vani (representing the applicant) to come better prepared to answer the valid questions and concerns of the residents, because 'that's not what happened here tonight.' People came to get answers and yet at one point Mr. Vani seemed to suggest that the site meets 'commercial zoning requirements?' without a drive thru implying a 'like it or not?' Tim Hortons can still build a restaurant attitude.

It appears the matter might now be referred to the Region because Airport Road is a regional road. Failing progress there, an Ontario Land Tribunal Appeal is an option. Keep up the good fight Caledon East!

Finally, and far more importantly, we have the travesty of traffic 'justice' that's left one family not only mourning the loss of their son but also the lack of accountability at a provincial level for that loss. Milo Yekmalian was killed in a horrific accident on Charleston near Shaw's Creek early last year. 'Justice for Milo' is now making headlines as charges related to the crash were recently thrown out of court over the lack of a signature on a piece of paper.

Pavan Bassi, a paralegal involved in the case is quoted in a Toronto Sun article as stating: 'It is 100% a technicality?'. This provincial offenses notice was void from the beginning because it didn't have the officer's signature and that becomes a fatal error.? It was an interesting choice of words to me because of course, there WAS a fatal error but it wasn't the missing signature, it was the one that caused Milo to lose his life at the hands of another driver who smashed into his car head-on.

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