

Safety first: New traffic lights near Caledon Central Public School now operational

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Getting to and from Caledon Central Public School is now safer.

New traffic lights at the intersection of Kennedy Road and Charleston Sideroad, an intersection adjacent to the school, are now operational.

Caledon Central's principal, Lesley Kennedy, first started working at the school three years ago.

When she became principal and saw how long it took school buses to get in and out of the school, and how unsafe the intersection of Kennedy and Charleston was, she knew something needed to be done.

She reached out to Ward 1 Councillor Lynn Kiernan, and the local Optimist and Lions clubs to put their voices behind an effort to get traffic lights installed. Kennedy and others gathered data at the intersection, focusing on the busiest times of the day for school buses: 9 to 9:30 a.m. and 3:45 to 4:15 p.m.

Kennedy said it was a collaborative effort between the school, Councillors, and the community to get the lights installed over the last few years. Even an initial "no" couldn't stop the group dedicated to making the lights a reality.

"This is so important? we didn't stop because this is about the safety of kids and families and staff members and the community," said Kennedy. "We're so grateful that it's come to fruition? I'm excited for the beginning of the school year this year to see the difference that it's going to make around safety for our students, our staff, and our families."

Kiernan said she was very excited to see the traffic lights operational and that the whole project to get them installed is a great example of how the Councillor-Community relationship should work.

"You get a notification from a community member that there seems to be a problem, you come out to have a look at it, you engage with people and you work together to find a solution," said Kiernan. "I'm very proud to stand here today? this has always been about safety."

Kiernan, Kennedy, Regional Councillor Christina Early, Caledon's Peel District School Board trustee Stan Cameron, Caledon Central staff, and staff from the Region of Peel and Town of Caledon got together at the intersection on July 24 to share thanks to all who worked to get the lights installed.

Early said she was so happy to see the traffic lights operational and equally happy to see the level of collaboration it took to bring them to the intersection.

Cameron agreed and said the traffic lights project was a great example of community engagement and collaboration.

Jennifer Johnston, who lives right next to the intersection of Kennedy and Charleston, said she had two kids attend Caledon Central for 10 years. Despite the new traffic lights causing there to be much more noise around her house, she has always been an advocate for them. Back when her kids went to Caledon Central, they had to take a bus to get to school even though the school was so close because it was too unsafe for them to cross Charleston Sideroad.

"You would take your life in your hands going across there because of the speed of the traffic and the amount of it," said Johnston.

?We always thought it would be great if you could safely cross the intersection.?

Johnston said getting traffic lights at the intersection is long overdue. She's lived in the same house since 2005 and has seen the amount of traffic on Charleston Sideroad drastically increase over the years.

?I did have some hesitations when it came to noise, but safety is the paramount concern,? she said. ?I always kept that in the front of my mind.?

Watching school buses try to turn on to Charleston from Kennedy, Johnston would sometimes see them have to wait five minutes or more.

Johnston said she hopes the traffic lights will also contribute to traffic slowing down in the area, as she sees many drivers not following the 60 kilometre per hour limit there.