

The Trouble with Tim

by SHERALYN ROMAN

Tim might have been a nice guy. There may even be a few people around who still remember him, either personally or professionally. I hear he was a pretty good hockey player back in the day. That his name is now ubiquitous with a donut chain has, I believe, very little to do with him. It was his partner Ron Joyce who initiated the unparalleled growth of Tim Hortons after the man himself passed away in a car crash. Tim's or Timmies, as it is affectionately known, is now ?Canada's largest quick-serving restaurant chain,? with well over 5,000 locations across at least 15 countries. So, what's the trouble with Tim? Locally, the trouble is with where Tim (Hortons that is) wants to go next.

Caledon used to be a picturesque collection of towns, villages and hamlets that together made us a tourist destination as well as a pretty place to live. Growth is inevitable, of course, for any community in Ontario and particularly here in Caledon as we have been provincially mandated to expand exponentially over the next 30 years. With growth comes change and with change comes increased traffic?.and with traffic, apparently also comes the need for coffee. But change or no change, do we REALLY need accessibility to a Tim Hortons coffee on every streetcorner? Caledon East residents are currently facing down a proposal to convert three existing lots into a Tim Hortons location, on Airport Rd., just north of the intersection of Old Church. The ice cream shop will disappear - and - I would argue, so too will the essence of what a ?downtown,? in a small and largely residential village, should be.

At the moment, the amount of truck traffic throughout Caledon is frighteningly awful. Just a few years ago a dump truck barrelled into the bank at the corner of King and Highway 50, the ?four corners? of downtown Bolton, located in a valley and which now, as a result, is protected to some degree by improved traffic calming measures and the Emil Kolb By-pass. Caledon East is similarly located in a valley but traffic calming and a by-pass seem unlikely. With 18 wheelers regularly barrelling through the area, or alternatively, getting stuck trying to get up the hills on either side of town during snowstorms, adding a Tim's to the equation won't help. Increased residential housing has also resulted in more traffic through the area and an already awkward intersection, fronted on one side by the LCBO, will almost assuredly only get worse with the proposed construction of a Tim Hortons (including a drive through) happening right alongside it. Trucks parked on either side of Airport Rd. as they duck in for a quick coffee fix, delivery vehicles maneuvering in the parking lot and long lines of idling cars are each a recipe for a traffic disaster. Both road and sidewalk safety is sure to be compromised and with three schools in the area and plenty of children walking to and from, combined with the amount of bus traffic too, kids and teen's safety is also at risk.

While logistics and safety should be the paramount issues, another very real risk is the loss of that ?feeling? that the downtown core of Caledon East offers. The reason people want to move to, and live in, a place like Caledon East is precisely because it offers that quaint downtown feeling.

You can walk to Gabe's for an espresso or a fantastic dessert. You can pick up a bottle of wine and pop into the butcher shop for fresh veggies, cheese and some meat for a special dinner. The Four Corner's bakery has a hot table that has your breakfast, lunch or dinner covered and unique grocery items to take home too. There is easy access to the trail system that runs throughout Caledon and walkers, bike riders and others often make Caledon East their destination on purpose, stopping at the downtown core for a treat before continuing on their way. These local businesses are the heart of a downtown location like Caledon East. Tom's for breakfast, It's Roxie's, for great shopping, you can even visit the dentist, a doctor, an accountant, get your hair done or your car examined, not to mention the various other restaurants and businesses that complete the area. At the top of one hill we have groceries and more, and at the other, a great place to dine or gather on the patio, or even get married! Caledon East is busy enough and there are enough businesses to support both existing residents and those who are to come. Do we really need to add a Tim Hortons to the mix?

The Town Council needs to ask itself some difficult questions. What is the added value of a Tim Hortons in this location? What are the traffic impacts? WHO is the proposed location really serving, residents or folks simply passing through town? What is the potential revenue and is it worth the costs of driving other businesses out of town, traffic chaos or worse, the cost of a life or lives lost due to an accident?

Traffic in the area is already problematic and I don't think there is a traffic study in the world that would predict a drive through coffee shop would make such chaos any less of a reality. A meeting is being held on February 21 at 7 p.m. at Town Council Chambers. Residents and business owners should make their concerns known. This isn't about halting progress, or the growth of Caledon East but rather, about protecting those who already live there, those that own businesses in town and anyone who chose this location as their future home, based at least in part on its downtown, friendly ?feeling.? It's hard to describe but easy to destroy and the problem with Tim (specifically Tim Hortons that is) is that it won't really fuel the local economy but rather, only fuel the needs of those just passing through.