

Traffic - It's a touchy subject

BY SHERALYN ROMAN

It's obvious to even the most casual of observers that there are some pretty significant traffic issues in and around Caledon.

These issues relate not only to safety but are divisive amongst community members who disagree strongly on how they might best be resolved. In Bolton, concerns about traffic in the downtown core weigh heavily on the minds of residents after seeing a number of nasty accidents impacting pedestrian safety.

In Valleywood, the ongoing Valleywood bridge/off ramp/u-turn mess (I'm not even sure how to describe this - you simply have to see it to believe it) requires immediate attention and, according to many residents residing in Southfields, Kennedy Rd should be renamed 'Southfields Speedway' due to the volume of traffic speeding and drivers who pay little or no attention to stop signs.

I believe that each of these issues need addressing urgently but I believe equally, that they speak to larger and more generalized issues of poor driving skills, a lack of care and concern for our fellow neighbours and a pervasive 'Me First' attitude.

Bolton residents, you have a bypass. It's a beautiful, shiny new road with virtually no traffic on it! Frustrated by the time it takes to drive down one hill and up the other? Take the bypass! It is just waiting to be used. Don't like the idea of all-day parking, but want a pedestrian friendly downtown core? You can't have it both ways. It's that simple. If you want your children to enjoy an ice cream without putting their life at risk, if we want to encourage more people to view the downtown core as a destination and not a deterrent to our drive home, then changes have to be made.

We've already successfully diverted truck traffic, now we have to work on ways to mitigate the impact of vehicular traffic. We might not all agree on what that looks like but 'trial' periods of change, traffic studies and/or recommendations, all need time in order to be properly evaluated on their potential for success. Ultimately, we all have a stake in this. We all want to enjoy the benefits of a vibrant, healthy downtown core and I'm fairly certain we all want to enjoy it safely. I would also hope none of us want to be responsible for taking a life due to poor driving decisions. For Caledon and for all drivers, our first priority /default setting must be safety so please: 'Slow down, pay attention, stop talking on your phone and drive' - #Just Drive.

Perhaps at this point you're thinking 'easy for you to say,' and you'd be right. Talk is cheap, actions speak louder than words but again - for a democratic, civilized society to work, action is required from all of us, occasionally even, actions that we don't want to undertake but which serve the greater good.

Bolton is not the only area where traffic can be a nightmare. Should you wish to see a community divided - visit Valleywood. There, residents are faced with an off-ramp from Highway #410 dumping traffic directly into their neighbourhood and literally hundreds of their neighbours to the south using said off ramp to enter Valleywood and then conduct a u-turn outside the fire hall (because that's safe) all in an effort to speed up their drive home by what I'm sure must be a good minute or so.

What folks might accomplish in that saved sixty seconds each day I can only guess at - solving world peace perhaps? To describe all that is wrong with the Valleywood entrance/exit would take days but suffice to say when an accident occurs (and they do, frequently) an already ugly situation gets even uglier. Worse still, if Highway#10 is closed for any reason north of Valleywood, residents get to see 'up close and in person' any number of 18 wheel transport trucks diverted into their community, who then try exiting through residential streets.

Traffic lights have been approved to help alleviate some of the issues but like Bolton and the downtown core, residents are divided on how much, or how little, they feel lights will help address concerns.

Southfields Speedway can't be closed. It's the main entrance/exit and the main road traversing the entire neighbourhood. It literally

(and figuratively) divides the community. I say it 'divides' for several reasons. Literally, it runs down the middle of the neighbourhood and figuratively, because while there are bad drivers, there are many, many families living in Southfields who drive safely, appropriately and mindfully. But those who seem to have forgotten that a STOP sign means stop, not 'slow down' or 'ignore completely' are becoming increasingly problematic.

Children getting on school busses or walking to school know the rules of the road better than the adults driving the cars around them! It's the adults driving who don't stop for flashing school bus lights or even at crosswalks where crossing guards are placed to help those kids safely cross the road. Schools in the area have even had to implement special programs and policies around vehicular traffic in order to help kids safely navigate their way to school.

Safety comes first and compromise is not an option except where it requires us all to put safety first. If you drive a car, someone, somewhere deemed you fit to drive and knowledgeable about the rules of the road. Regardless of where you live and work, you have a duty and an obligation to drive your vehicle safely and responsibly. Where you have to go is not any more (or less) important than where any of your fellow drivers on the road are going. Whether you agree or disagree with taking the Emil Kolb By-Pass or with the installation of traffic lights or your 'right' to make an unsafe u-turn, the rules of the road apply to each of you equally.

You don't get to disregard speed limits and put a child's life at risk. Enough already. Everyone repeat after me, 'Slow down, pay attention, stop talking on your phone and drive' - #Just Drive.