

Traffic - part two

by SHERALYN ROMAN

Last week, soon after I hit ?send? on my article about slowing down traffic in Caledon, unfortunately just a little farther north of where I sat, yet another traffic tragedy was unfolding. Sadly, another Caledon citizen lost her life in a collision that took place at or near the intersection of Olde Base Line and Hwy #10. It seems, despite our best efforts, truck traffic barrelling through Caledon, continues to be a significant issue.

The issue of any fault in this situation is not up for discussion. I wasn't there and while accidents are called accidents for a reason, this one is still being investigated. What we do need to continue talking about however, is the sheer volume of trucks travelling through Caledon whether on Hwy#10, shuttling across Mayfield Rd., or moving up and down Hwy#50. In all instances we have 18-wheelers, dump trucks, tandem dump trucks and cement haulers moving across town 24 hours a day and very often at unacceptably high rates of speed. Now before you jump to any conclusions I am NOT anti-trucker. Over my lifetime I've watched an uncle, a cousin and some very close friends of mine in the trucking business successfully navigate literally millions of miles between them safely. I have nothing but the greatest respect for those who try to drive safely when they are surrounded by folks who think nothing of cutting in front of a loaded vehicle weighing around 80,000 pounds without any appreciation for the fact that a truck needs about a 40% longer length of both time and distance to stop safely. That said the reality is also true that there are as many bad truck drivers as there are bad car drivers. Unlike a car crash though, being hit by a bad truck driver often means only one person is walking away from the collision and it's usually not the driver of the car.

While last week I was congratulating the Town for their efforts at supporting community safety by slowing down traffic, this week I find myself wondering what more can be done? Local communities are benefitting from slower vehicular traffic but in the meantime it appears to have become a bit of a free for all on the surrounding roads used by commercial truck traffic. It's now time to focus on those roads that see significant truck traffic ? particularly if we are also contemplating the arrival of yet another #400 series highway cutting a wide swath right through the middle of our community.

It's long past the time that we initiate a call for better surveillance and enforcement. As much as we are known for our pretty roads, trails, villages and hamlets, we are also known to play host to a vast array of industries relying heavily on trucking. It follows that we must also be vigilant in protecting our citizens and visitors from the potential harmful impacts of this truck traffic. If this latest accident tells us anything it's that we must seek out, nay ? insist upon ? greater OPP and MTO surveillance patrols. We must investigate further opportunities for limiting truck traffic in certain areas of Caledon and look to examples like the Emil Kolb Parkway / By-Pass in Bolton as a way to help improve road safety. We must enforce ?right lane only? rules for truck traffic and we must, in conjunction again with the MTO, look closely at the use of speed limiters. Truck traffic is supposed to be subject to speed limiting devices set to a maximum of 105 km/hour. However, in reports dated as recently as January of this year, the MTO device most often used to track and measure speed limiters (EzTap) is apparently not being used regularly due in part to its alleged unreliability.

Currently, Caledon is widely recognized as a transportation hub in the Region of Peel. It's also seen, as at least one recent article suggests, as a ?town under siege,? currently fighting illegal trucking operations that set up trucking yards on land zoned as agricultural. Of course there are many legitimate operators doing business in Caledon and who contribute not only to the local economy but also to our community through philanthropy. To you I say thank you. But the problem remains. Caledon, recognizing the seriousness of the issue of illegal trucking, has recently implemented a task force to tackle the problem of ?pop-up? trucking yards and its related issues. This is good news even as this latest tragedy proves it's clear that more must be done and soon. One shouldn't have to ?gamble? with their life while simply travelling out and about town to get to school, work, for sightseeing or even just to do the grocery shopping. Trucking through town safely is a significant issue and it's time we tackled it head on before another head on collision causes yet more grief.