

When Community Speaks

by SHERALYN ROMAN

Recently, a series of community meetings have taken place on topics that include proposed MZOs, much needed traffic calming measures and concerns being raised around bylaw infractions. Presumably unintentional, the irony of the Town listening to resident traffic concerns while discussing MZOs is not lost on me. Lest you've forgotten, the proposed MZOs would bring 12 new developments to Caledon with over 35,000 new homes being built, all without necessarily giving full and due consideration to good planning. Meanwhile, the traffic (and bylaw) concerns being expressed by the community suggest that mayhem and dangerous roads are already endemic. Do we really want to add to the chaos by slamming through legislation that will result in yet more poorly planned roads and subdivisions?

Let's start with Southfields, a community of 15,000 that has only two exits, one of which involves a roundabout, is a single lane in each direction, and passes directly in front of a school. Promised future exits haven't yet, or never will, materialize. Dangerous intersections abound along Kennedy Road and residents are clamoring for traffic calming measures and state that bylaw enforcement is desperately needed. Residents were told that "traffic calming evolves over time" and we'll agree mistakes in poor planning can't be fixed overnight but how long will they take and at what cost to human life? What such mistakes do provide us with however, is a template on what NOT to do when it comes to planning future communities of the size and scale of Southfields and I question whether good planning will happen at all under a "12 MZOs passed all at the same time" scenario.

To be fair, at the Southfields meeting I was encouraged to hear that plans are in place to address a key intersection used by some of our most vulnerable populations, area seniors and local elementary school students, but still question why it took a personal meeting with the Mayor and her planning team, followed by a very vocal community meeting, to get those plans in place. I hope that the promised traffic lights, whether in the budget or not, will happen sooner than later. I was encouraged that the Mayor, Councillors and Town staff were all on hand to hear from the community and that the OPP were also in the room shedding light on worrisome statistics about the current state of traffic across Caledon.

In fact, the OPP statistics are quite concerning. To date this year, Caledon OPP have already laid 12,000 charges under the Highway Traffic Act! That means over approximately 150 days, an average of 80 traffic offenses per day are occurring and that number necessarily only represents those that are caught! People going through red lights is "at a record high" and in just one night in May, five impaired driving charges were laid. (See my concerns about driving impaired from last week's column.) To me, once again, such numbers suggest that if Caledon proceeds with adding the 35,000 homes our Mayor wants to add, additional traffic mayhem is sure to ensue without proper planning in place.

Valleywood is another community heavily impacted by traffic that has only gotten worse in the last few years. Worse off than even Southfields, it has only one way in and out and every time there is an accident (happening with increasing frequency) residents often find themselves unable to exit or enter their community. With the 410 dumping directly onto Valleywood Blvd, much of the traffic heading south into Brampton misuses this exit by illegally turning one left turn lane into two, or by heading into Valleywood and making dangerous u-turns at two separate intersections. With rapidly increasing housing builds in Mayfield West II happening, and the eventual connection of Tim Manley Ave and Valleywood Blvd., one might reasonably anticipate this current traffic nightmare will only get worse.

Finally, Bolton and Highway 50 traffic chaos is, I would suggest, at an all-time high. The truck traffic, container yards and trucking yards are making the drive not only pretty much intolerable, but perhaps one might say, even bad for one's health. The stress and anxiety experienced by those simply trying to commute to and from work alongside hundreds of transport trucks is likely leaving some residents with untold physical consequences. But sure, let's build more homes along the corridor and cross our fingers it all works out. By the way, as an aside, are any of these 12 proposed MZO developments affordable housing? Asking for all the young adults in Caledon currently living in their parents' basements.