

Metrolinx, Town to make parking woes easier for Heritage residents

By Brock Weir

Now that neighbours in Aurora's Northeast Heritage District (HCD) will have to live with GO Parking in their area for at least six months, the Town and Metrolinx are set to work together to make things easier for those impacted.

But, according to former councillor Bob McRoberts, a property owner near the Our Lady of Grace Church parking lot, there are several issues that need to be addressed.

"I believe the situation is a reminder of how important it is to communicate," Mr. McRoberts told Councillors last week. "If Metrolinx had spoken to residents before signing we would have told them that the neighbourhood is the Northeast Old Aurora Heritage Conservation District and, as such, there exists a plan passed under Town bylaw with statements encouraging the reduction of traffic.

"We would have told them that it was also a traffic-calmed neighbourhood along with a history of why. We would also have made sure Town Council was aware and involved on our behalf. By working together, the first two words of the Metrolinx vision statement, I am sure a better solution to overflow parking needs would have been found before contracts were signed and people were upset."

In discussions between residents and Metrolinx that have been ongoing since early August, Mr. McRoberts told Council the Provincial body overseeing GO Transit had "no idea" the parking lot they had leased from Our Lady of Grace was in a Heritage Conservation District and were also unaware of the traffic congestion at Yonge and Wellington although new signage will direct commuters along Wellington Street to Yonge in order to reach the church "and therein lies one of the neighbours' primary concerns.

"We advised them that Yonge and Wellington was not the most popular place to be with regards to traffic, and of course people will take the most direct route, which is through the neighbourhood, as did many cars in the heritage district before traffic calming," said Mr. McRoberts.

These were concerns shared by local lawmakers.

According to Ilmar Simanovskis, Aurora's Director of Infrastructure, Metrolinx has "recognized they have probably over-extended their authority within the Town" on traffic issues.

"They are more than happy to work with us to ensure that proper signs are put in place," said Mr. Simanovskis. "It will be a collaborative effort. For us, it will be mobile signs to ensure that we minimize infiltration in the community and Metrolinx would have to review their signage strategy to ensure that it be as supportive towards our objectives as possible."