

INSIDE AURORA: Interchange of Ideas

By Scott Johnston

"I see that Council is pushing the Region to speed up the construction of a new interchange at St John's Sideroad and the 404."

I glanced across the table at my friend John, who was looking at last week's copy of The Auroran.

He took another sip of his coffee, and continued.

"They've got it all wrong."

"What do you mean?" I asked. "That's been planned for a long time, and really makes sense now. I mean, look at all the development on that side of Town. An interchange will make it easier for people to get around."

"But Council doesn't want that." He swivelled in his chair to look at me.

"They think they do, but they don't."

Seeing my puzzled expression, he asked, "What's been the biggest traffic issue in Aurora for years, apart from parking?"

"Speeding, I guess."

"Exactly. Look at all the measures that have been introduced just to deal with that issue. First there was the northeast quadrant several years ago, and all the expensive traffic calming features that went in..."

"And out?"

"Yes," he smiled, "and out."

He continued, counting off on his fingers.

"There are ongoing discussions to reduce Yonge Street to one lane each way south of Wellington, and increase street parking there and in Library Square. Speed limits have come down across Town. These digital electronic signs showing how fast you're driving over the speed limit are everywhere. They've trying to get the police to provide more enforcement. They've plugged in more stop signs and traffic lights. They've even painted and put interlocking brick in some crosswalks to slow cars down."

"And it says right here," he tapped the newspaper in front of him, "that Council just accelerated the installation of new speed humps on Kennedy, Mavrinac and McMaster."

"Everything," he concluded, "designed to slow things down."

"Council's spent tens - probably hundreds - of thousands of dollars over the years to encourage traffic to move as slowly as possible through Town, with no end in sight."

"Yes," I agreed. "Not sure where this was going."

"Building a new off ramp at St. John's will just help speed the entry and exit of more vehicles in and out of Town. That's counterproductive to what they've been trying to do."

"In fact, what they really should be considering is to push the region to take out an interchange."

"Close off the one at Bloomington, for example," he said. "If you did that, anyone wanting to enter or leave Town via Highway 404 could only do so at Wellington."

"But that would be chaos!" I exclaimed.

"In what sense?"

"Well, you know how busy that area is already. With everyone forced through there the whole east side of Aurora would become a big bottleneck."

"So?" he prompted.

"Traffic would be congested to a crawl, and ...?"

"You mean it would slow down?"

"Well, yes...?"

"Without any extra enforcement, new signage or expensive traffic calming?"

"Um...?"

I wasn't sure how to counter that. Strange as it seemed, he had a point.

"Granted," he concluded, taking another sip of coffee, "it may not solve speeding everywhere in Town. They'd need to think of ways to further congest things on our northern, western and southern borders."

"But it's a start."

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