

Norfolk's *Pathways For People* deputation to Norfolk County Council  
on June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017 concerning Norfolk's sidewalk policy

My name is Frank Woodcock, I am here today representing Norfolk Pathways For People. We are a community group working with the Haldimand Norfolk Health Unit advocating for new and improved trails and pathways in Norfolk County.

Pathways For People and the Norfolk County Active Transportation Strategy that was passed by Council, envisions subdivisions and communities connected by pathways leading to a network of linkages with the greater community.

On Nov 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016 I stood here on behalf of Pathways For People speaking in support of the Norfolk County Active Transportation Strategy as part of Sustainable Integrated Master Plan. That night as per resolution 20 Councillors accepted this document.

Report P.W. 16-81, Integrated Sustainable and Active Transportation Master Plans Completion, was received for information - "AND THAT Council adopts these Master Plans as policy for the planning and design of the facilities and programs discussed therein; AND FURTHER THAT the Integrated Sustainable and Active Transportation Master Plans be incorporated in the Official Plan Update and future Strategic Plan reviews."

On page 39 of my copy of the approved Active Transportation Strategy item 4.1.6 Prioritizing Sidewalk Improvements, "Where possible, the County should aim to have sidewalks on both sides of the roadways for routes that make up the designated Active Transportation network (within community areas)."

And, "Priority should be given to the designated Active Transportation routes where no sidewalks currently exist within the "walkable" area of a local school to establish a more connected pedestrian system."

And, "One of the priorities of the strategy is providing youth with direct access to school through active and safe routes. Those students who live within 1.6km of a school are considered "able" to use an alternative mode of transportation and are not identified as candidates for busing. As such, proposed Active Transportation routes where no sidewalks currently exist within 1.6km radius of a school should be considered a priority for the County."

Lastly, "The county should review and revise their site plan and development approvals process to reflect the development of Active Transportation linkages. New Development areas should provide direct connections to the AT network, where feasible, and should be implemented in the early stages of development..."

This was passed unanimously by Council. Pathways For People rejoiced.

Pathways For People who worked closely with MMM Consultants on the Active Transportation Strategy recently found that on May 18<sup>th</sup>, Council decided to change "shall" to "may" in section

8.2.2.5c of the official plan which reads, "Sidewalks shall generally be required on one side of local roads. In instances where local roads lead directly to a school, park, community facility or other facility which generates pedestrian traffic, or where safety of pedestrians is of concern, sidewalks may be required on both sides of the road."

Norfolk County has gone from a "shall" sidewalk policy to a "may" sidewalk policy and Pathways For People would like to go on record as advising Council to the contrary for many reasons including liability.

I've included in my deputation local OPP pedestrian collision statistics.

### Pedestrian Collisions

Type	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Property Damage	0	0	1	0	0
Personal Injury	1	1	2	8	5
Fatal	1	1	0	2	0
Total	2	2	3	10	5

When County plans called for the removal of one of two sidewalks on Bellevue, the residents told Council they wanted two sidewalks. They received two sidewalks. So why do people like sidewalks so much?

The sidewalk appeared in urban areas to separate pedestrians from mud and horses and horse droppings. Without any rules of the road in place, cars appeared and there was even more reason to separate pedestrians from horseless carriages. And then the car became precious and needed its own housing. At first garages were separate from the house but as time passed garages became more important and now they are prominently featured in front of a house, sometimes with 3 garage doors. Cars play an important part of our active lives.

In the day of the separate garage, urban areas had sidewalks for safe passage and these pathways throughout town were used regularly for errands and to get to school, church, doctor, dentist, grocery store or arena. It was also used for cool evening strolls and catching up with neighbours and changes in their neighbourhood. In this era people didn't ask to NOT have sidewalks because to them the reason was evident.

Come to think of it, once people had sidewalks they didn't ask to have them removed. And I believe to this day people don't make delegations to Council to have their sidewalk removed. And I believe there are few or no deputations asking for a fire hydrant to be moved. It is a safety issue. Why aren't sidewalks treated like fire hydrants, storm sewers and STOP signs?

The Office of the Chief Coroner of Ontario's Pedestrian Death Review made many recommendations. Recommendation #19 states that municipalities, in developing their

complete streets approach to pedestrians, should consider strategies to prevent collisions occurring where pedestrians are walking along the road. Some of these strategies might include developing new communities that provide sidewalks.

I live in Simcoe on the hill where Tyrell and Bellevue meet, from my front stoop I look south down Bellevue past the circle, past the community mailbox on the right, past upper Union St on the left down to Foster St. To the east Tyrell St drops down to King. The surrounding streets were made for vehicle traffic not pedestrian traffic.

The houses were built in the 50's and 60's so they have either no garage or a one-car garage either separate or adjoined. For various reasons cars park on the street. There are no sidewalks.

It is 2017 and in our neighbourhood, seniors walk to the community mailbox, students walk to school, joggers jog, dog walkers walk, bikers bike and this all takes place on the road with the parked cars and no sidewalks. The Reformer is delivered on foot and the other papers via a toss from a passing car. We are within walking distance of an ice cream shop, medical clinic, hospital, nursing home, physio therapy, Church, groceries, Library, town hall and arena.

When the community mailbox appeared, it became a meeting place where we catch up with neighbours, greet new ones and of course post and receive mail. There is no sidewalk so in our case as per Canada Post's preference, the box faces the street where people park for their mail. The mailbox is accessible to those with physical challenges and therefore removed from the street enough to allow a wheelchair to maneuver.

Three houses down a young man uses a mobility device to get around so with no sidewalks he uses the street and negotiates the Bellevue, Tyrell corner on the road. At the Tyrell, Bellevue corner the yield sign was replaced by a STOP sign but not everyone updated. It is a speedy curve both ways and often used as a short cut from Cedar to West or vice versa. My physically challenged neighbour shares that curve with the traffic.

The retired couple across the road walk down the street each day two abreast, the cyclist on Union uses Tyrell for a training hill, cyclists like the route from the 8<sup>th</sup>, down Evergreen, Oak, Bellevue to head north and west via Park Rd. A group of women joggers run up and down the hill weekly for exercise. I've seen skateboarders surf the hill, an 18-wheeler make a delivery and another transport heading to Breyer's was misled by his GPS and headed down upper Union only to find it a dead end and had to reverse back out onto Bellevue where people walk.

Sometimes it rains, sometimes it snows and in the morning joggers are exercising, dog walkers are walking, Moms with children in strollers are needing a change of scene, school children within 1.6 km of Elgin, Trinity or Simcoe Comp tote their backpacks, people are heading to work, Senior Support Services delivers a meal, the Canada Post van delivers mail, people park to get their mail and a regular sized school bus and an accessible school bus arrive. It is garbage day and the recycling truck followed by the garbage truck chug up the hill, Leon's is delivering, someone has a lawn service, someone is speeding, someone has lost their cable, our

newspaper carrier crisscrosses the street, snow plow, street sweeper, a lost 18-wheeler and an electric mobility device are all sharing the road. I ask, "Why encourage a pedestrian accident?"

I'm not a lawyer but if a municipality had a "shall" sidewalk policy and then turned it into a "may" sidewalk policy while at the same time accepted a costly Active Transportation Strategy from a consulting company that does Active Transportation work throughout the province, I'm asking, "Would that create a due diligence issue?" If the municipality approved an Active Transportation Strategy that included sidewalks in every new development and sidewalks for those within the Board's of Education 1.6km transportation policy and then knowingly reversed that decision, I'm asking, "Would that be a liability issue?"

Let's build safety into every new community with a "shall" sidewalk policy.

Thank you.