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Monday, January 18, 2010

Deputation to Council re: Report No. P.W. 10-01 - Orchard Ave / Chapel Street reconstruction

My name is Alan Ladd and I am a community representative with Norfolk Pathways for People. Norfolk Pathways for People is a citizen group that focuses on:

- Advocating for new and improved trails and pathways in Norfolk County.
- Building a community that supports walking and cycling as a mode of transportation.
- Promoting the safe use of local trails and pathways.

Trails and pathways include sidewalks.

Pathways for People support the Public Works and Environmental Services report regarding the Orchard Avenue/Chapel Street Area Reconstruction – Sidewalk Locations.

The availability of continuous sidewalks is a key component in walkable communities. A walkable community also has street lighting, and a variety of shops, services, parks, schools, and workplaces within walking distance of homes. In addition, it is a community where the walking routes are safe, direct, comfortable, and convenient for all pedestrians.

Walkable communities are an important aspect of a healthy and vibrant community. To encourage citizens to rely on their cars less and choose walking more often, the environment in which they live, work, learn and play must support walking as a form of everyday transportation.

Tonight's discussion is timely given Norfolk County's new Accessible Customer Service Policy.

The policy statement indicates that "Norfolk County is committed to eliminating barriers and improving accessibility for persons with disabilities in a manner that respects dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity."

"Norfolk County recognizes the diverse needs of all our residents and customers and will respond by striving to provide services and facilities that are accessible to all."

This includes sidewalks.

Accessibility for Ontarians with a Disability Act [2005] outlines 5 standards that Norfolk County must comply with. The built environment is one of these standards.

An accessible community includes sidewalks.

On November 17, I had the opportunity to attend the Healthy Communities Planning Day hosted by the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit. Attendees represented community groups and organizations, municipal staff from both Haldimand and Norfolk counties, community residents and the private sector. We did an exercise that captured our collective vision for both Haldimand and Norfolk counties. This vision included a community that is less dependent on cars and more physically active; is a safe environment for kids and has lower crime with eyes on the street.

A healthy community includes sidewalks.

Norfolk County Official Plan, Section 8 Networks and Infrastructure, states that bicycle and pedestrian trails and paths contribute to healthy communities. Section 8.3a states the County shall work towards providing bicycle and pedestrian paths, separated from the roadway, on existing and proposed roads, on abandoned rail corridors, on utility corridors, and within parks and open spaces, as appropriate.

This includes sidewalks.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada has created a position statement on the Built Environment, Physical Activity, Heart Disease and Stroke. The Foundation recommends that municipal governments, community planners and developers work together to improve the built environment by “retrofitting and rezoning existing communities to include sidewalks, parks and pedestrian connections to nearby schools, workplaces, shops and services.”

Chapel Street is a vital connection to the Simcoe downtown core and to Water Works Park. The setback from the street and proposed location for sidewalk is county property and therefore, public property, and should be available for safe use by all residents and visitors to the area. The most economical and feasible time to do this sidewalk installation is now, when the entire reconstruction work is being done.

For these reasons, and many more, Norfolk Pathways for People encourages Council to support the installation of sidewalks on Chapel Street and Richard Avenue, as per Report No. P.W. 10-01.

You can't put a price on the health of our citizens and our community.

Thank you for your time.

Alan Ladd



Health Action is funded by the Ministry of Health Promotion and supported by the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit. Health Action partners with 30 individuals and organizations, and promotes integration, communication and support environments that encourage people in our communities to live healthy lives.