

Mayor disappointed in method of Road Needs Study

Shelburne Councillors received a Road and Sidewalk Needs study from the Engineer Consulting firm Golder Associates at the February 8 council meeting.

Concerns about the condition of the roads and, in particular, the sidewalks, prompted the study.

Mayor Bennington told the company he was disappointed to learn the assessment observations had been conducted from an automobile.

"So you assessed our sidewalks from a vehicle?" questioned Mayor Bennington on hearing the report.

"A very slow moving vehicle," responded Andrew Balasundaram, the presenting engineer for Golder Associates.

There was sense that this may not have been sufficient, considering the challenges residents in wheelchairs and individuals coping with disabilities face on a daily basis, navigating uneven and cracked patches of sidewalk around Shelburne.

According to the report, its purpose was to update the Town's roads asset database to deal with its aging pavement and sidewalk assets.

Surveys were conducted last October and November according to Ministry of Transportation (MTO) guidelines for Municipalities. Pavement conditions were rated and rehabilitation timelines forecasted for a total of 24.8 km of roads.

The Mayor has been committed to improving sidewalks and streets since touring areas of Shelburne in a wheelchair last year with resident Debora Ellis who inspired the "virtual reality" tour.

Based on their Riding Condition Rating and Pavement Condition of the Road Network ratings, the engineers reported that the average condition of Shelburne's road network at the time of the survey was 70 out of a possible 100 points "which is considered to be good."

However, two roads, Industrial Road and Joseph Street were recommended for full reconstruction within 0-3 years as they measured below the recommended threshold for collector roads.

Forecasted reconstruction and reclamation needs for Town roads in the next 0-3 years were estimated by Golder at a cost of just under \$500,000; looking ahead 3-5 years just over \$1,000,000 and another \$1,000,000 plus in the 5-7 year forecast.

The company recommended, "in addition to the reconstruction/rehabilitation forecasts" presented, a preventative maintenance program be implemented for the roadways each year to delay more expensive rehabilitation.

Golder reps recommended maintenance priority be given to sidewalk slabs requiring grinding as heaved slabs may pose a safety risk to pedestrians. The company suggested the Town consider replacing entire sidewalks with high damage during road rehabilitation of any given street rather than replacing singular sidewalk slabs.

Councillor Walter Benotto said waiting for a street rehabilitation to fix sidewalks would be "pretty hard to do" considering current conditions of some sidewalks used by disabled pedestrians.

Mayor Bennington said one of the problems was that "able bodied people" were assessing the sidewalks and "from a vehicle" and that he was "disappointed" to hear this.

By Marni Walsh