

Intensification

by BRIAN LOCKHART

I'm starting to understand why so many Ontarians have decided to sell their home and move to Nova Scotia or New Brunswick.

Every once in a while, someone on Facebook will post a photo of some Italian fishing village built on a rocky cliff or overlooking a beach.

Someone will always reply with a comment 'oh, I could so live there.'

For a North American, living in a village like that would get old, real quick.

There are no real roads, you're living on top of your neighbour in a really old house. There are no amenities. There's no place to park your car.

Fishing village life would quickly become a case of cabin fever.

Another post I've seen is a photo of Barcelona, Spain, from the air. It is indeed, an interesting photo of a city that was definitely planned. The streets are laid out well, with a massive cathedral in the city centre.

When you look closer, the entire city is a series of hundreds, maybe thousands of apartment buildings built in squares. Some streets will never see sunlight.

That's 1.6 million souls jammed into 39 square miles. If you're a muscle car enthusiast or enjoy outdoor sports or activities, this is not the place for you.

New York City is also one jam-packed concrete canyon of fun where you have the privilege of paying thousands of dollars per month for an apartment so small you have a bathtub in the kitchen.

People choose to live there. Although I suspect if you took many native New Yorkers for a drive outside of the city, they may have a spiritual awakening of sorts.

For some reason, the provincial government has decided that new development in Ontario should be based on 'intensification.' You jam as many people possible into the smallest area, and tell them they are happy.

Well, it's not working.

A couple of weeks ago I was invited to a dinner being held in Niagara Falls. That should be about a two-hour drive from where I live.

Normally, I give myself plenty of time because I know the QEW can get pretty slow at times. I've had some frustrating times on the QEW but there really isn't an alternative since Lake Ontario gets in the way.

This time, however, it was just an exercise in futility.

Traffic started to slow as soon as I entered the QEW from Highway 27. From there, it became a nightmare of stop-and-go driving.

Four hours after leaving home, I was still in Burlington. A line of around 30 transport trucks blocked the right-hand lane. I was

trapped.

I noticed that at least half of the cars in the car-pool lane were occupied by single drivers. People were so frustrated, they didn't care, and there was no place for police to position themselves to monitor that lane anyway.

The minutes ticked by. It was now 6 p.m. - dinner time. I figured at the current rate of travel, it would be another 1.5 hours just to get through Hamilton, then at least another 45 minutes to get to my destination if traffic started moving at a normal rate.

Yup, I was going to miss the party.

I finally managed to pull off of the highway, and as I crossed the bridge to find the on-ramp to head the opposite way, I could see the traffic stopped for miles heading west and south.

What a waste of a day.

When I started back on the highway, in the opposite direction, I noticed the impact of 'intensification' going through Oakville. There were massive condominium buildings on the north side of town ? a town which used to be a small enclave of nice houses and parks.

Now there are thousands of people living on top of each other and everyone leaving the same place to go to work in the morning. And this is just one of many areas in the GTA where there massive buildings that dominate the skyline.

Whether we like it or not, our society relies on automobiles to get around. There is no appropriate mass transit to conveniently get people to their destination, and many people wouldn't use mass transit even if it were available.

Intensification is only going to make the situation and driving, worse in the future. Especially since the federal government is allowing one million people per year, to land in Ontario.

Newfoundland is starting to look pretty good.