

I attended the Ontario Good Roads Association's annual conference in Toronto in April with Councillors Jubb and Frank and with Mayor Schummer in attendance for the special delegation with the Minister of Transportation. I sat in on 10 various sessions but there were two main points of focus for me this year.

One: Caring for infrastructure with looming asset management deadlines approaching; repairing and caring for, rather than buying and replacing

and Two: Traffic calming and walkable communities

Understanding Condition Evaluation Methodologies/Indices and their role in Asset Management Planning was one of the sessions that drove home the first focus. One of the panel members, a very funny civil engineer stressed that municipalities do not take full advantage of mandatory biennial bridge inspections. His advice was to attend the inspections, ask questions, make plans, repair, patch and most interestingly, wash your bridges! wash them every year. He was asked why. Well, washing the grit and muck and salt off your bridge will extend its life and secondly, it allows you to SEE what's going on, cracks, fissures, loose parts etc. Put it in your work schedule every year.

Along the same lines, one of the booths in the trade show was a company which specializes in repairing sidewalks. Sidewalks where pads have been uprooted and are no longer lying flat can be trimmed and moulded to properly fit again. Tremendous savings in money.

City planner, Jeff Speck, in his ballroom plenary to all of the conference attendees, spoke to the second focus with his talk, "Creating more Walkable Communities." He talked a lot about patterns of streets and slowing traffic through our downtowns by reducing lanes, 4 way stops and sidewalk bump outs. His themes: Selling walkability on wealth, health, climate change, equity or community was captivating.

My favourite take away was a topic which echoed the brilliance of our own Brock residents and my constituents: no yellow line down the centre of a narrow road or street. Absent the line, vehicles, bikes, joggers and pedestrians walking side by side with a stroller, all flow organically amidst each other safely. With the line, drivers panic to stay in their own lane strictly and pedestrians and cyclists feel terrorized and pushed right off the road due to lack of space.

As usual, OGRA proved immensely valuable on every level; through the sessions, the trade show and the sharing with municipal representatives from Ontario's 444 municipalities.

In addition to the formal conference program, Regional Chair John Henry, Mayor Schummer and Regional Councillor Jubb organized a delegation with the Minister of Transportation, Prabmeet Sakaria to address the problem of the Beaverton bridge. It was a highly constructive conversation with the minister, and we have recently seen the very positive results that flowed from it. It was an honour to be included in the meeting as part of the Brock delegation, which also included Councillor Frank.