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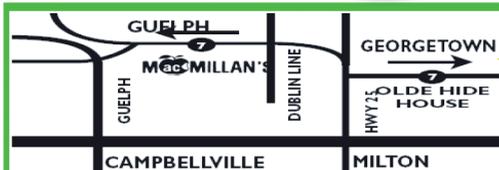
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Provincial move may cost Town big bucks for roads

By **CYNTHIA GAMBLE**
Staff Writer

Town officials were stunned earlier this year to learn the Province has cancelled the Connecting Link program, a move that could cost the Town close to a \$10 million.

The provincial Connecting Link program provides up to 90 per cent of funding for maintenance, repair and upgrade of provincial highways that go through built up communities— in this case, Guelph St. and Main St. N. in Georgetown, and Queen St., Young St., Mill St. E. and Main St. N. in Acton.

In the past the Town has relied on Ministry of Transportation funding for 11 projects costing \$7.7 million, of which MTO contributed \$4.9 million— 64 per cent of the overall bill. From 2013 to 2018, the Town expects about \$9.4 million worth of work will need to be done on the Connecting Link portions in Halton Hills.

"There are a number of projects on Connecting Link roads that need to be done immediately," said Chris Mills, Director of Infrastructure Services. "Without a comparable replacement program, the download of responsibility will place immense pressure on the Town's finances, in particular, the Capital Replacement Reserve."

In particular, is the CNR bridge on Main St. N. which requires structural repair of more than \$700,000. Other projects include the full signalization of traffic lights on Main St. N. at School Lane (\$105,000), resurfacing of Main St. N., Young St. and Queen St. in Acton (more than \$2 million) and turning lane changes on Guelph St.

"This is a huge disappointment. The importance of this program could not be underestimated with respect to the Town's Capital Forecast," adds Mayor Rick Bonnette. "Without this, or a similar program, the Town's resources will undoubtedly suffer by using other funds to finance required work on these major road ways."

"It's not a subtle download from the province," said Regional Councillor Clark Somerville at a recent council meeting when Council approved a recommendation to send a letter off to the Province expressing disapproval and the need for reinstatement of the program.

The Province still maintains its jurisdictions over these roadways meaning the communities still need to get MTO permission for installation of traffic lights or half-load restrictions.

"Not having operational control, but being required to fund the construction is a concern to the Town," said the staff report.

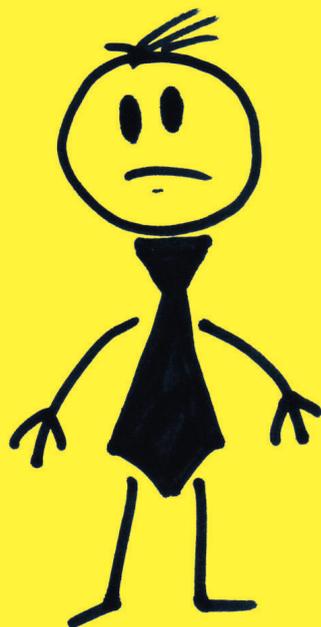
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