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GULP members outnumbered at Region

By IRENE GENTLE
The Champion

Members of the Guelph Line Preservation Committee — or GULP — came out to battle but found themselves swallowed by opposition Wednesday.

The citizens' group appeared before the Region's planning committee with hopes of stalling the passage of a construction bylaw for the reconstruction of a 3.2-km stretch of Guelph Line between No. 10

Sideroad and No. 15 Sideroad.

Instead, they found themselves outnumbered by neighbours and councillors who favoured the project.

The proposal is the final phase of an ongoing aim to clean up what the Region feels is a dangerous stretch of road. GULP members say they don't want to kill the plan so much as scale it down. They feel speed is the real root of the road's troubles.

"People come to drive in the country, not Erin Mills Parkway," said GULP member Walter Tkachenko. "By going higher and

higher (in speed) you need greater and greater reaction times."

Designing the road for a lower speed would impact how drivers view the area, said GULP member Pat Bryant.

"When people enter our little community, they should immediately feel that they are in a quiet, rural, safe neighbourhood," she said. "Saving the trees and the feeling of a country road — not a highway — is very important to me."

But other residents praised the Region for its efforts in the area, such as addressing local concerns about the loss of between 250 to 300 trees. They urged the Region to move ahead with the plan.

"I'm here to represent the so-called silent majority of those who live in Nassagaweya," said resident Paul Rufford. "And they're firmly behind this project."

John Glasgow, a 30-year resident of the rural area, attended the meeting for another agenda item but felt he had to speak up.

"Guelph Line is an absolute disaster," he said. "Let's get it done before someone is killed out there."

Resident Nick Cortese appeared before committee to represent his family, who own seven properties on Guelph Line. He characterized it as rife with accidents and near misses.

"(Mr. Tkachenko) failed to mention that he himself has been t-boned," said Mr. Cortese. "I, myself, have been driven off the road."

Michael West of the Nassagaweya Community Consultation Committee also backed the Region's proposed plans.

"It would be very nice if we could revert to the 1850s and have buggies running up

and down, but the reality is it's an arterial road," he said.

And if speed is the main issue, police can't crack down before the road is reconstructed, added Mr. West.

"When they pull a car over, where are they going to put it," he asked. "There's no shoulder."

Resident Lynne Vanstone, who bought her Guelph Line home in 1997, reported that she feels her life is in danger each time she pulls out her driveway.

"It's just that dangerous," she said.

Committee members who had driven the strip didn't need much convincing that the road is in need of repair.

"(Driving in the area) is one frightening experience," said Milton Councillor Barry Lee. "I feel strongly that this project is long overdue."

Burlington Councillor John Taylor was also familiar with the area. "Even in good weather it's dangerous. I hate to think of what it would be like in the winter."

Burlington Councillor Joan Lougheed said she has noticed a decline in the roadway over the years.

"As a family, we've noticed a significant difference in the safety," she said.

And lowering the speed limit is rarely an effective way to slow lead-footed drivers, noted Oakville Councillor Liz Behrens.

"In my experience, if we decrease the speed we just move the problem somewhere else," she said. "To lower the speed will only increase the stress and make them take more chances than they have in the past."

The proposal will head to council for final approval Wednesday.



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