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Traffic gridlock: Commuters in a jam



Catherine O'Hara



David Lea

Everyone has experienced it. Many endure it every day. It's the ordeal of being stuck on a traffic-choked highway or road staring at an endless line of brake lights. *Shifting Gears*, a three-part Metroland West Media Group special series, reveals that traffic congestion not only has serious personal implications, it also impacts the environment and economy. A relief valve is needed. Here is part one.

By Catherine O'Hara and David Lea
METROLAND WEST MEDIA GROUP

In an attempt to beat traffic, Jenn Dickson Tooley leaves her Waterdown home very early every weekday morning. Just as she pulls out of her driveway at 5:30 a.m., a family in nearby Freelon is starting its day. Like Dickson Tooley, the Petznick clan is out the door and on the road before many people's alarm clocks ring.

These Flamborough residents aren't alone. According to the 2011 National Household Survey, an estimated 15.4 million Canadians commute to work. Of those, 11.4 million drive to their place of employment. More than 77 per cent of workers in Hamilton get behind the wheel of a car, truck or van to get to their destination. In Burlington, there are an estimated 1.75 vehicles per household. The sheer number of vehicles on local roads



According to the 2011 National Household Survey, an estimated 15.4 million Canadians commute to work. Of those, 11.4 million drive to their place of employment. Above is the busy Hwy. 401 in Milton. *Eric Riehl / Metroland West Media Group (Follow on Twitter @halton_photog)*

and highways makes the daily commute a grind for many. Severe traffic congestion can turn a half-hour drive into a two-hour exercise in frustration, robbing those trapped within it of time with their families and slowing the pace of business by keeping goods and services from reaching their destinations in a timely manner.

It's a necessary evil, said Dickson Tooley. "It's a necessity to be endured for a job in an industry where my specialty is rarely found in Ontario outside of Toronto, and where my family has other ties and commitments keep-



ing us from moving into the city," said the IP system administrator.

Cory Petznick would love nothing more than to work closer to home. But finding a job in

Mississauga, Hamilton, Milton or Kitchener that would pay him a comparable salary is easier said than done.

A trade planning manager for a company that markets, manufactures and sells organic and natural products, Petznick tolerates the drive to his job near Toronto's Lester B. Pearson Airport, a commute that takes more than an hour during peak hours.

"It's just unproductive down time but a necessary part of life that we face everyday," he said.

His wife Molly, a Montessori school teach- **CB**

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Thank you. Signed. Rudolf. (Very Old Reindeer)

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Signed. Rupert

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