

Milton looks to replace popular downtown pedestrian bridge

By Melanie Hennessey
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

The Town is looking to find a way to replace a popular downtown bridge that Conservation Halton (CH) wants to remove this year.

The former truck bridge behind Carriage Square, which has been converted into a pedestrian crossing, has been deemed a hazard that needs to come down by the conservation authority.

But Councillors Colin Best and Mike Boughton want to see the well-used link to the downtown core maintained via a replacement bridge.

The local politicians put forth a motion at the most recent council meeting that directs Town staff to work with CH, the Downtown Milton Business Improvement Area, 100 Millside Drive condo board and Carriage Square property owners to find an acceptable means to replace the bridge in the same location.

"I'm looking for some sort of joint solution," said Best.

The motion, which was endorsed by council, notes that, "Residents on the Millside Drive area have expressed concern with the pro-

posed removal of the existing pedestrian bridge over the 16 Mile Creek channel by Conservation Halton and they desire to maintain an accessible link to the downtown commercial area."

The motion was also supported by Ernie Crowe of the 100 Millside Drive condo board.

He told council that there are about 1,000 people living in the four condo towers on Millside Drive, with many of the residents being older or disabled.

The 30-foot pedestrian bridge provides an access point for these individuals to quickly reach Carriage Square to do their shopping or grab a coffee, he said.

"To lose this crossing would more or less double the distance they would have to walk," he said, noting it would be particularly difficult to travel the extra distance in the winter if the sidewalks along Martin Street haven't been cleared. "This gives access to people who would otherwise be stuck in their homes in inclement weather."

Crowe did his own survey of foot traffic over the bridge and found there's an average of 30 crossings per hour, with more than 50

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Ernie Crowe
Milton resident



Council members would like to see the pedestrian bridge behind Carriage Square replaced.

per cent of people using walkers, canes and scooters.

He said he has already been in contact with a company in Quebec that makes prefabricated bridges and was told a bridge to replace the existing one in this location would cost \$19,500, plus shipping.

Crowe also told council that Conservation Halton has offered to swing the bridge into position.

"This seems like the most cost-effective means of solving the problem," he said.

Councillors Rick Malboeuf and Mike Cluett, along with Mayor Gord Krantz, voiced their support for working with local partners and residents to find a solution.

"I personally would like to see that bridge remain there," noted Krantz.

The existing bridge has been around for about 40 years, linking Millside Drive to the Carriage Square strip mall on Main Street over a flood channel.

The structure was originally built as a local vehicle access across the Sixteen Mile Creek prior to the construction of the flood control channel. Over time, it became used as a pedestrian crossing to the downtown area from the residential buildings to the north. Conservation Halton CAO Hassaan Basit said the agency has previously consulted with neighbouring landowners and the Town about taking over ownership of the bridge, but there was little interest and nothing was concluded.

A CH review conducted in 2012 found that the bridge either needed substantial repairs, to be replaced completely or taken down. At that time, residents in the neighbourhood voiced their opposition to its removal as many of them — predominantly seniors — use it daily to access restaurants, fill medical prescriptions and meet with friends for coffee.

Basit said the bridge isn't required for CH's flood control operations and his staff isn't in a position to maintain the structure, particularly during the winter months.

Town staff is expected to report back to council in September with recommendations.

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