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This message brought to you as a community service of The Economist & Sun/Tribune

Residents protest sidewalk plan

BY MIKE ADLER Staff Writer

Not in our front yards, say homeowners on Markham's Drakefield Road about steps the town is taking to protect children walking to school.

Residents on the shady street near McCowan Road and Hwy. 7 fear losing mature Norway maples to a sidewalk they believe is unnecessary.

Their trees are festooned with ribbons and signs accusing the town of seeking "to kill me for a sidewalk".

"For 40 years children have walked safely under my boughs," the posters say. "Please help me live."

The decorated trees, however, are not in immediate danger.

Two weeks ago, Markham Council approved a new sidewalk for construction this summer beside Roy H. Crosby Public School, from 109 to 131 Drakefield. It also told town staff to report on whether the sidewalk needs a further extension to 141 Drakefield.

Many residents of those sections of the street rejected plans for sidewalks two years ago, and maintain the sidewalk's supporters are spreading exaggerated fears about children's safety and giving residents no choice in the matter.



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEN

These residents of Drakefield Road in Markham are upset that the Town of Markham and the York Region District School Board want to construct a sidewalk for children attending nearby Roy H. Crosby Public School. They believe the sidewalk could endanger the life of trees bordering the road.

"This isn't the way a fair society operates," said Morley Lem, who added the town should concentrate on managing bus traffic around the school.

This week several people said children have always used the front of their lawns to walk to the school, without incident.

"We're willing to put signs on the lawns that say 'Children, please walk on us,'" added Karen Pascal, who said the issue has brought adversarial feelings to the neighbourhood. "There are solutions besides our lawns being given up."

But Bianca Mason, the school council chairperson, said Roy H. Crosby buses in 185 out of 310 students, and the school was built on an elbow that affects visibility and sharpens the angle at which 14 buses must turn on the street.

Adding a bus loop would not end the need to stack buses on the street, where children are walking, she said, adding parents have seen "horrible circumstances" in front of the school where people were lucky to avoid injury.

"Even if it's one child walking"

See McKELVEY, page 12.

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MARKHAM ECONOMIST & SUN

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