

# 'Betrayed'

## Waterdown Road resident believes City Hall decision paves way to four lanes

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Published on Jun 22, 2007

Michael Staresinic says he feels "betrayed" now that the city has voted to expand a three-kilometre section of rural Waterdown Road to as many as four lanes, to address a projected population boom in neighbouring Hamilton.

"Something from each resident on that road has been taken from them..." he said, after unsuccessfully appealing to politicians to put a stop to four lanes. "The only animal I've seen flip flop more often is a salmon on a fishing crawler. Hamilton got what it wanted."

A majority of the city's community development committee passed a motion by Ward 3 Councillor John Taylor that calls initially for the construction of three lanes on a foundation of pavement wide enough for four lanes.

A fourth lane would materialize based on how much development has occurred through Official Plan Amendment No. 28 (OPA 28) in the Waterdown community, which is part of Hamilton. Approved by the Ontario Cabinet in 2002, OPA 28 calls for the construction of 6,500 homes, which would eventually double the population of Waterdown.

City staff has long said Burlington should expand Waterdown Road to four lanes by as early as 2018.

This week's committee meeting also voted that King Road be expanded to two lanes through the Niagara Escarpment crossing to handle the traffic volume.

The city will also look at the possibility of making two of the three lanes on Waterdown Road one-way traffic in the morning and afternoon rush hours as an alternative to adding a fourth lane. Electronic signs would be required to alert drivers to the change in traffic direction.

The estimated cost of the widening is \$26-28 million depending on what option is chosen -- roughly \$18 million to widen Waterdown Road to four lanes, \$7.3 million for work on King Road and \$1.8 million to convert two lanes on Waterdown Road to accommodate same-way traffic at peak times.

The price tag is \$10-\$12 million higher than what had been previously presented to councillors. The increased costs include the city's \$7.3-million proposal to make the narrow Niagara Escarpment crossing on King Road two lanes rather than installing a streetlight to control traffic flow, plus other improvements that will add about \$2 million.

While Burlington city officials have said Hamilton would pay 95 per cent of the cost of the project, Hamilton Councillor Margaret McCarthy told the Post Wednesday the breakdown of cost sharing is still very much up in the air.

She doesn't see Hamilton agreeing to a 95-5 split because Burlington is also contributing to Waterdown Road traffic congestion by encouraging expansion of the GO train station in Aldershot, the Waterdown/403 interchange and by its desire to open 300 acres of employment lands west of King Road, she said.

"The decisions they've made have put tremendous pressure on Waterdown Road so to suggest the cost sharing should be 95 per cent Hamilton is a challenge I would make," she said.

In a June 6 letter to Burlington, Hamilton's City Manager Glen Peace stressed that four lanes is the preferred option. Even if four lanes are approved and built he noted development in the area attributed

to Burlington "would be factored into any final (cost-sharing) agreement."

Taylor told the committee his motion is a "viable solution" that serves "the best interests of all citizens".

"Growth happens, people come and you have to improve the roadways," he said.

This was the third time the controversial issue of widening Waterdown Road had been before councillors for a vote in the last 15 months. The previous two times council was hesitant to pass any recommendation involving a four-lane option.

In March, Mayor Cam Jackson put forward an option of building Waterdown Road to three lanes only, with traffic calming features like islands and bike paths. Taylor told the Post components of Jackson's proposed calming features would be incorporated into the new road design.

Having questioned staff and consultants about the projected traffic numbers, Jackson said: "I'm not convinced we're going to need four lanes in the future."

Aldershot Councillor Rick Craven is upset by his colleagues' decision, which must be ratified by council July 3. He was the committee's lone dissenting vote and said he is convinced the current two-lane Waterdown Road will be doubled.

"The people of Aldershot are pretty smart -- they can't be fooled," he said after the meeting. "Four lanes of pavement are four lanes of pavement no matter how you paint it."

Burlington still faces a number of challenges before road work gets started, most notably the cost-sharing plan with Hamilton and potential opposition to the King Road expansion from Conservation Halton and the Niagara Escarpment Commission. Both groups have said they support widening Waterdown Road to four lanes but are hesitant about major work being done to King Road.

Meanwhile, Hamilton councillor McCarthy said she's pleased a four-lane platform has been approved by politicians. She said it's a recognition by local politicians that four lanes may be needed.

"That sounds reasonable to me as long as we're not providing a false sense of security to residents," she said.

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