Phase 1 to address traffic complaints on The Ridge Road

By Jim Eadie

Longstanding traffic problems on The Ridge Road near Coe Hill were the subject of intense discussion at the Mar. 24 regular meeting of Wollaston Township Council. With the current potential expansion of the Bear Ridge Campground and Cottages on that road, the existing problems with traffic have returned to the new council's urgent ?to do? list. Kirk McCaw, roads superintendent for the municipality, was asked to join the discussion.

A drive along the 3 kilometer stretch of The Ridge Rd. between Kendon Lane and to south of Bear Ridge Campground and cottages reveals a paved roadway composed of tight turns and blind hills, with many of these features also passing through narrow spots bordered with a rock cut on one side of the road, and up to a 50 foot drop to Wollaston Lake on the opposite side of the road.

McCaw told council that in the past, the municipality has reduced the speed limit in that section, and posted ?Watch for Pedestrians? signs.

?We can't enforce the speed limit, that is up to the OPP,? he said. ?People seem to lose their train of thought real quick. We try to keep the signage down ?. try to at least have fewer signs than the Don Valley Parkway. You can't put a stop sign at the Bear Ridge, because then you have a stop all day, all night, for everyone, even in the off season.?

McCaw is already in consultation with Bear Ridge Campground and Cottages to establish some type of crosswalk at their business location. However, primarily in the summer season, the roadway is also well used by off road vehicles, motorcycles, cyclists, joggers and walkers, and in most of the hazardous areas there is no room to widen the roadway due to the topography.

?It is time to do traffic counts,? said McCaw. ?Most of the problems seem to be Friday nights to Sunday in the summer, but we need to know how much traffic, when is most of the traffic, and the speed count of traffic both directions.?

Renting a radar sign would collect all of that information, as well as display speeds to the drivers on the roadway. ?Those radar signs do get your attention,? he said. ?We could also move it around to get information on some of our other roads.?

Deputy clerk Verna Brundage noted that the OPP have a radar speed sign that the municipality could borrow, but in the past they have never been able to access the information that is collected by the device from the OPP. The other limitation on the sign would be its availability, as it is booked for use by other communities and organizations.?

?I believe we are responsible for that road,? said Councillor Michael Fuerth. ?We have a responsibility to protect our citizens and visitors.?

?And this has been a problem before any talk of the Bear Ridge expansion,? said Reeve Graham Blair.

?I like the idea of a Community Safety Zone,? said Deputy Reeve Marilyn Brickles.

Following a discussion of other options such as flashing lights and rumble strips, even hiring an off duty police officer, council decided that they needed traffic data on the road to make a responsible decision. Municipal staff was directed to continue crosswalk discussions with Bear Ridge Campground and Cottages, and as well to investigate obtaining the necessary equipment to do traffic counts.

Then council passed a bylaw redefining, and posting the 3 kilometer stretch of The Ridge Road as a Community Safety Zone. A copy of the bylaw will be forwarded to the OPP for their attention and enforcement.

The present 40 kilometers per hour speed limit will remain unchanged, however fines are doubled for violations encountered by the police in the designated zone.

?All we need is for a couple of people to get a ticket there,? said Brickles. ?I think the word will get around fast.?

On another road, Brundage advised council that the municipality will receive approximately $25,000.00 funding from the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund, which council has decided to apply to the single layer re-surfacing of the Wollaston Lake Rd. to the public beach.