

To: Mayor and Council

Dear Friends:

I am writing to you to support the motion by Councillor Garcia and Councillor Williamson regarding their concerns about the preferred option for the rebuilding of Main St, Lock St. and Lakeport road. I was intending to speak to the issue on February 26<sup>th</sup> however I understand that this meeting was cancelled and I am away on vacation during the March 4<sup>th</sup> meeting, hence this letter.

I am likely one of the most informed persons regarding parking and traffic in Port Dalhousie given my history over the last 20 years. Perhaps even more so than some staff and certainly more than the consultants that have provided input to the Region regarding these proposals. I am not a traffic engineer however, I have lived in Port almost 50 years and I spent 52 days of my personal time cross-examining witness's about parking and traffic during the OMB hearing held in this very room in 2009, something I was commended for by the OMB chair and even lawyers for the developer.

I learned a lot during that process, not the least of which is that traffic experts do their best to please the people who hire them. I also learned that timing is everything. During cross I discovered for example that measurements were taken during two days when it was 66 degrees and raining. This is the baseline being used in a beach town? Its not that these are bad people but working for municipalities are their bread and butter and they want return business. Traffic engineering is a controversial discipline. Jane Jacobs a world-renowned expert on urban planning, who I read in university held them in disdain and even wrote a letter of support for us during the hearing. It is far too simple for a junior working on an auto-cad machine to craft something in two dimensions without regard for topography or future developments. The experience on the ground is always much more difficult.

I have no personal stake in this since I live on the edge of the Heritage District and my access and egress from Port is mostly via Martindale, Third St. and Lakeshore. I do however speak for a lot of residents that I have spoken to including well known major contractors and persons with knowledge of the area. My reason for advocating on this issue is strictly for the sake of our community and the deep desire to have a solution for Port Dalhousie that actually works. It would be an awful failure on our part if the Region invested 15 million dollars into new roads only to find out that it does not work, is unsafe and causes more issues than it solves.

Public EA consultations on this were mostly held during COVID and though there are some improvements in the latest iteration it is still fatally flawed. The EA report shows that this preferred option won out by merely one point. (77-76) The reason for this is that most of the public is enamored with the proposed pedestrian street on Lock St. which is a mere 200 ft long without a view to the consequences. I too love pedestrian malls and I have been at Argyle St. in Halifax as well as Sparks St. in Ottawa and Stephen St. in Calgary. They are simply not comparable to Port Dalhousie in either access or public transportation options. Focusing on this "shiny object" alone will lead to irreparable harm. The residents of Port know how things work and there are better solutions available.

I will cover just a few of the issues since they are too many to address in a few words.

**Parking:** Port has already lost quite a number of Parking spaces. Some legitimately and others via privatization. This proposal will add to that number by eliminating all of the remaining street parking in Port's Commercial Core leaving only the paid parking in the Lakeside lot for almost all activity. We are

constantly being told that a surface space costs 20K to build however this Regional plan is removing likely 40 or more without any compensation. That is a net loss to the community of some 800,000 dollars of value. This is in addition to the parking exemption that already exists for the commercial core and the 20,000 square feet of proposed commercial that is affected. It is interesting that with all the proposed developments we can increase the population of the Heritage District by almost 50% and yet continue to remove parking. This cannot go on!

Traffic: Traffic, you will always have a problem with, but it can be minimized. The struggle between Port as a tourist destination vs Residential is real and you can't increase one without decreasing the other. Residents who know how things work, know about the backups that happen regularly during the summer months. Any consideration of traffic has to be part of a comprehensive plan which includes transit, mixed use development and other vital supports however, this proposal offers nothing. The loss of parking will inevitably lead to backups into the community where parking is free but unstructured. The paid parking remaining will also have a severe impact on not only existing businesses but on any developments ability to attract the type of businesses Port residents will need. The hundreds of new residents coming to Port Dalhousie should not have to drive out of Port to obtain a bag of milk and add to the traffic congestion.

Safety: The proposed change on its face is unsafe. The addition of several blind corners with multiple hidden access's is asking for problems. Sidewalks that end in curves and cross walks that are not visible until you are on top of them, as well as parking lot access's for over 500 vehicles that are unseen until you get there, are all significant safety concerns. We have been here before, in the 50's Port had two-way traffic going around and it was changed to one way because of accidents. These safety concerns are new and are being created by the proposal. We have to keep in mind that Port has not fully functioned for a long time and we need to anticipate what it will be like when it is. We have past experience to learn from in the 90's when things were more active. Lets learn from it.

There is much more that could be said, but the danger is that we are via this process, without either the City or Regional Council making any decision on a preferred option, sleepwalking into a disaster. We need to address this now, not when a lot of money has already been spent on design of an option that is not tenable. We have better options that are available to us. The city has control of this issue since you will be asked for land swaps and other considerations in order to make this plan work. Now is the time to take a hard look at this and get it right. Failure is not an option.

Thank-you for your attention in this matter.

Sincerely,

Hank Beekhuis

Port Dalhousie Conservancy

