

A cure for MTO's inattention?

IN ADDITION TO IT BEING the sesquicentennial of Canadian Confederation, 2017 also happens to be the 100th anniversary of Ontario's provincial highways system.

In 1917, with more than a year left in the First World War, the Ontario government announced plans for its first provincial highway. Later numbered Highway 2, the lone road went from Windsor to the Quebec border, but officials of the new Department of Highways also talked in terms of additional highways that would run between the Great Lakes.

In that same year, the counties of Dufferin, Peel, Grey and Simcoe formed a delegation that went to Queen's Park to press the deputy minister of Highways as to the need for a highway between Port Credit and Owen Sound. The deputy minister's response was that the route should be built as a county road, since there were no immediate plans for more than the one east-west route. However, it was only a few years later that the roadway was taken over as Highway 10, and by about 1930 it was fully paved, with concrete north of Forks of the Credit Road.

Since then, Highway 10 has been widened to five lanes as far north as Orangeville and four lanes to Camilla and between Primrose and Shelburne, and supplanted by Highway 410 through Brampton and Mississauga, with provision for a total of 14 traffic lanes on 410 and Hurontario Street through Brampton.

As matters now stand, commuters and the motoring public in general should have no complaint about the adequacy of the roadways south of Orangeville, where planning is in the hands of the Downsview-based Central Region of the Ministry of Transportation (MTO).

However, that is surely not the case concerning the roadway between Orangeville and Owen Sound, which for some reason has been assigned to the MTO's West Region office in London, where those in charge haven't the faintest idea as to the need for major improvements in the roadway resulting from huge increases in traffic volumes and the demise of railway branch lines, and clearly couldn't care less.

Readers of this week's Citizen can see supporting evidence for our contention in the response Sylvia Jones got to her letter to minister Steven Del Duca. It took 2 1/2 months for a reply from the West Region office confirming that there are no plans for any significant improvement, as well as a total absence of any monitoring of current traffic conditions.

Yet anyone who happened to travel north of Orangeville last weekend found four major bottlenecks, at Primrose, Shelburne, Flesherton and the bridge over the Saugeen River south of Flesherton.

In each case, even by mid-afternoon on Saturday, the northbound traffic was backed up for many blocks, and in the case of the bridge for several miles because the MTO didn't require the traffic signals to adjust for traffic flows. (There was no backup for southbound traffic then, but plenty on Monday evening.)

Perhaps what's needed is a delegation from Dufferin, Grey and Bruce to plead with Mr. Del Duca for a transfer of responsibility for Highway 10 to MTO's Central Region so a commitment could finally be made to widen the road to the same five-lane standard found south of Orangeville as far as Primrose, and to build the long-awaited Shelburne bypass.

There should also be a study of the need for improvements north of Shelburne, including third lanes for safe passing every 10 kilometres, bypasses at Flesherton and Markdale and five lanes north of Chatsworth where the single roadway also carries traffic from Highway 6.

But in the immediate future, and at minimal cost, the traffic signals at Primrose should be switched to three phases to allow two lanes for left-turning northbound traffic, doubling the capacity at a tiny cost.