

Alder St. crossover subject to new Ontario law



By Jasen Obermeyer

As students are adjusting to going back to school this week, the Town of Orangeville has unveiled its first new pedestrian crossover (PXO) at the intersection of Alder Street and Montgomery Boulevard, one designed to make the area safer for students going to and from school.

Ready for use just in time for the school year, the PXO was approved at a Council meeting last December when, after several incidents and near misses, parents and residents complained of the dangers students faced in crossing the street.

The first crosswalk of its kind for the Town, it will provide a controlled street crossing in which pedestrians have the legal right-of-way. The crossover has some signage, a push button to activate flashing lights on the signs, additional signage in both directions indicating a crossover, and new pavement markings.

Doug Jones, Orangeville's Director of Public Works, says that while lights for the signs have not yet been installed, the crossover rules still apply.

Construction began in mid-August, the budget reaching around \$75,000. Mr. Jones attributes its cost rising from a budgeted \$25,000 because of the need to remove a drop-off area where the crossover is installed, along with installing new curbing.

Under an Ontario law passed last year, when a pedestrian is crossing at a PXO, drivers and cyclists must stop and wait until the pedestrian has completely crossed the roadway before proceeding through the intersection.

Pedestrians at such crossovers must indicate their intention to cross, wait for traffic to stop, and ensure they can cross safely. For cyclists and drivers, the rules are similar, to wait for the pedestrian to finish crossing, and ensure that the area is clear before moving on.

The new crosswalk rule was part of the Making Ontario Roads Safer Act, which was unanimously approved by the Legislature. The rule came from recommendations in the 2012 Chief Coroner's Report on Pedestrian Deaths, which looked at a spate of 95 deaths in 2010.

Orangeville Mayor Jeremy Williams, who had been pushing for the crossover for some time, says it has been an issue for a long time, but he is glad the crossover is installed now, and predicts it will be more effective than the ordinary crosswalks.

"A crossover is a lot more responsive to the way pedestrians move. They want to get from A to B," he said.

The mayor says depending on how this crossover goes, there may be other ones put up, and he is confident the one on Alder Street will bring safety to the area. "We really want to make our town friendly, not just for cars, but for pedestrians, and cyclists? We all have to share the road, and this just helps that."

Mr. Jones says that as for installing other crossovers, Public Works will "come up with a specific approach that would assist Council as to whether one should be installed in any given location."

Westside Principal Deirdre Wilson says it will take students some time to get used to it. "They've got to learn it's there and public's got to learn it's there, too."