

Dufferin County's road system marking its 100th anniversary



By Jasen Obermeyer

When you think of the year 1917, what comes to mind? World War 1? The Russian Revolution? Specifically as a Canadian, how about the battle of Vimy Ridge? Or maybe the infamous Halifax explosion? What about the formation of the National Hockey League?

And to be really specific, what do you think of having happened that year in Dufferin County?

Well, there is something to associate the County with the year, as 2017 marks the 100th year anniversary of Dufferin County's incorporation of a road system.

1917 seems so far away, so much has happened since then. There was the Great Depression, World War 2, the Korean and Vietnam wars, the Cold War, and the Civil Rights Movement, the space race and 9/11. There have been advancements made in modern medicine, technology, music, film, cars and transportation, along with the creation of television and the Internet, as well as land lines to cell phones; the list goes on.

As for Dufferin County, the incorporation of a road system has helped to create the County we see and live in today.

It provides transport corridors that ensure the local economy can survive and thrive as it is. It allows businesses and tourism to have clear passage within and throughout the County, explains Scott Burns, Director of Public Works for Dufferin County, who says that the road system is absolutely crucial to the County's growth and development. Certainly without it, we'd have a different Dufferin County.

The road system all began with the Dufferin County By-Law No. 488, with the road network adopted in its initial form in open council on December 14, 1917. The By-Law stated the County Council of the County of Dufferin deems it necessary and expedient to adopt a plan for the improvement of certain highways within the said County in order that the County may avail itself of the benefits of the said Act the Act for the Improvement of Public Highways, R. S. O., 1914, Chapter 40.

The original 1917 By-Law incorporated 23 sections of roadway into the initial County Road network. Several of those roads included the boundary line road between the Townships of Mono and Caledon (now Highway 9), boundary line road between the Townships of East Garafraxa and Caledon opposite the 3rd through the 6th Concessions of W.H.S., Caledon (now the Townline). Other roads included part of the Hockley Road from the road between the 1st and 2nd Concessions, W. H. S. (now Highway 10), to the road between the 4th and 5th Concessions in Mono, as well as the boundary line road between the Townships of Mulmur and Mono and between Amaranth and Melancthon, from the easterly limit of Mulmur to the easterly limit of the Shelburne (now Highway 89).

Today, there are 20 separately numbered roadways, resulting in a total of 324 center-line kilometres of road in the network.

Mr. Burns says that depending on the road, the traffic volume can be as little as a few hundred vehicles a day, to upwards of 14,000 vehicles per day. He used Dufferin Road 109 (formerly Highway 9) as an example of one of the County's well-travelled commuter and transport roads, ranging from 5,000 to 14,000 vehicles a day, depending on the day, the time of day, section of the road, and the season.

He said Dufferin Roads 124 and 18 (Airport Road) are very busy due to being common routes for those going to the cottage and beach in the summer, and for those traveling to the ski slopes during winter.

The longest continuous road is Airport Road, at approximately 40 kilometres from the southern limit in Mono Mills, to the northern limit in Banda.

Throughout the years, the road network has evolved, seeing various changes and improvements, including the pavement of roads, with the first appearing to take place in 1962, including a 15-kilometre section on Dufferin County Road 7 (Hockley Road).

Mr. Burns used the transfer of several provincial highways to the County in 1997/98 as an example of recent and significant change. This resulted in several roads changing jurisdiction from the County to some of Dufferin's local municipalities, with the last changes being finalized in 2002. As a result, several former provincial highways became Dufferin Roads 24, 25, 109 and 124.

Also used was the Dufferin Road 109 By-Pass extension, also known as the Orangeville South Bypass. This section of road, starting from the intersection of the Orangeville's Townline section of Dufferin Road 23 and Riddell Road, and running easterly to Highway 10, was a large new roadway construction project that opened to traffic in 2005. Part of County Road 109 is actually outside Dufferin County, located in the Town of Caledon and the Region of Peel.

Mr. Burns said when the County Road network was established, "it seems that a road was deemed a County Road if it connected any form of settlement to a more established urban area. Due to this, the early network was fragmented and somewhat disjointed compared to what the County has today."

He explained that initially, once the network was formed, there was an almost annual adjustment to which roads were included or excluded from the network. Once the County Roads became more stable in the 1950's and 1960's, there was a shift toward procuring sufficient land for road allowance widening, intersection improvements and road alignment corrections, to prepare for future projects.

"Along with this, the financial figures around roadwork also began to increase as the network we have today began to develop. This work cleared the path for our current road projects and continues today."

Mr. Burns says most projects they deal with are rehabilitating and maintaining existing infrastructure, including resurfacing roads and bridges, intersection build-out, additional turning lanes, and adjustments to horizontal and vertical alignments.

Asked if there are any new projects, he said not as of now, but the type of work in the near future is to accommodate growth in the County. "There maybe some studies to investigate whether additional lanes would be necessary on some of our busier roads."