

The Parkway Extension? A Road to Nowhere

1. WE CAN'T AFFORD IT

2. WE DON'T NEED IT

3. IT'S AN
ENVIRONMENTAL
MISTAKE

Why "the Parkway" is an idea whose time
has come . . . and GONE

1. WE CAN'T AFFORD IT

The Parkway extension is estimated to cost \$22 million (in 2001 dollars). As the City's yearly budget is only \$60 million, the money for the project will have to be borrowed. When we factor in the interest, the total cost to taxpayers is likely to wind up in the neighborhood of \$40 million. Paid back over 20 years, this means an additional \$2 million a year, or a 3% increase in your property tax bill.

This is on top of debt already racked up by the current City council. Projects such as Fairhaven, Millenium Park, the new Hospital and the Wellness Center have brought the City's tax- supported debt load from \$2 million to \$28 million in only three years! The graph to the left should make this trend alarmingly clear. We must control future debt increases.

The proponents of the Parkway extension have never shown an adequate economic argument for building the road. The cost-benefit analysis recently commissioned by the City has shown that **for every dollar spent on the Parkway, tax-payers would save only 12 cents worth of time and fuel!** The report's estimates confirm the total real costs of building the Parkway extension over the next 20 years at \$40 million, nearly **double** the \$22 million figure appearing on the referendum ballot. Moreover, the road as planned cannot stimulate commercial growth because it runs alongside already built-up residential areas. The facts are now undeniable: **building the Parkway extension would be a colossal waste of public money.**

2. WE DON'T NEED IT

Proponents of the Parkway extension would have voters believe that this road is the only way to meet Peterborough's transportation needs. Nothing could be further than the truth. There are a range of alternative solutions, including alternative routes, that the public should have the chance to discuss.

The Parkway was originally conceived as a City bypass some 50 years ago. Since then, Peterborough has grown mainly to the west, and the proposed Parkway route is now surrounded by residential neighborhoods on all sides. The misnamed road would no longer be a true limited-access "parkway," but a twisting assembly of arterial roads crossing other major arteries: Hilliard, Chemong, Fairbairn, Parkhill, Weller and Sherbrooke. **This means new traffic lights on all these roads and further delays for the people who use them.** In fact, Parkway users would encounter **at least 14 traffic lights** between Cumberland in the north end and the on-ramp to Highway 115, as shown on the map to the left.

In other words, **the alignment of the extension is largely irrelevant to Peterborough's traffic flow.** Data in the Transportation Plan show that the vast majority of trips taken during peak traffic times do not run between areas that the Parkway extension connects. And because of the numerous traffic lights required, the extension would not even make quicker access to those areas which it does connect. Traffic flows can be improved by a variety of other measures, such as more left-turn lanes and better synchronization of traffic lights.

3. IT'S AN ENVIRONMENTAL MISTAKE

The original Parkway plan called for a bridge over Jackson Park from Fairbairn to Parkhill. This example of out-moded 1950's thinking is now seen for what it is by most Peterborough residents: short-sighted and narrow-minded. The bridge itself would cost at

least \$10 million and cut right through the heart of Peterborough's finest parkland. Virtually everyone agrees that Jackson Park should remain a car-free zone.

However, the rest of the Parkway allowance is just as beautiful and just as valuable. In the north end, the route provides excellent trails for walking, mountain biking, skiing and bird-watching as well as a corridor for wildlife to move between Jackson Park and the northern city outskirts. In the center, the students of St. Peters high school use the route as a way to and from school. In the south end and in the north are important wetland areas which are under the protection of the Otonabee Conservation Authority.

As Peterborough expands, interior green areas become absolutely essential for the well-being of the people and the attractiveness of the city. **Large green areas help keep urban temperatures down during our hot summers, and help purify our already compromised air.** Designating the proposed Parkway route as a true “park” or “greenway” would cost little and add immeasurably to the City's long-term attractiveness to potential residents. Building a major road through it would be an act of environmental vandalism. We must continue to cultivate green-space if we want to survive as a vibrant small city through the challenges of the next century.