

From: R Russwurm <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Wednesday, August 26, 2020 11:58 AM
To: Town Clerk <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Recent Highway 26 speed limit change

Good morning,

Could you please confirm this email has been received and will be forwarded as appropriate for the Hwy 26 speed limit discussion?

Thank you.

Dear Mayor Soever and Council,

We are submitting this letter to Council of The Blue Mountains with the intent of adding our voices to the discussion regarding the recent reduction of the speed limit of Highway 26 between Delphi Lane and Grey Road 21.

As local residents, we recognize that this stretch of Hwy 26 has challenges and must service a wide range of traffic needs from local access to inter-regional commerce. However, the change of speed limit from 80km/h reduced to 50 km/h gives us significant concerns from public safety perspectives.

We have all experienced drivers taking undue risks passing others. When the speed limit is set artificially low, impatient drivers will attempt to pass more often including passing in risky situations. The potential for head-on collisions will be greatly increased if the speed limit is not correct for the road "feel". Our own driving patterns have changed recognizing that the road is less safe than it was before the speed change.

Our hope is that any future decisions about the speed limit on Hwy 26 are based on sound technical knowledge and not merely on opinions. Traffic engineers and scientists have over 100 years of experience on how to set safe speed limits to provide the best level of public safety based on the competing interests of traffic patterns and adjacent land use. The Ontario Traffic Manuals and the Traffic Association of Canada (TAC) (<https://www.tac-atc.ca/>) provide a wealth of best practices based on decades of research and real world experience. The very knowledgeable and experienced technical staff at the Ministry of Transportation are invaluable resources as well.

We find the public engagement and communication leading to the speed limit change lacking. Although we feel a technically sound decision is paramount, that does not reduce the responsibility of public officials to properly communicate the reasons for a change and receive public input. This applies not only to the Town of The Blue Mountains but also to the Ministry of Transportation under whose jurisdiction Hwy 26 lies.

In conclusion, we ask that public officials base decisions on sound technical knowledge from experts and include the public by obtaining their input, informing them on how the decision is made, and providing adequate notice of upcoming changes.

Sincerely,

Reg and Anneli Russwurm

[REDACTED]



Town of The Blue Mountains

32 Mill Street, Box 310
THORNBURY, ON N0H 2P0
<https://www.thebluemountains.ca>

OFFICE OF: Mayor Alar Soever

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: 519-599-3131 Ext 400

Sent via E-mail

August 31, 2020

Reg and Anneli Russwurm

Email: [REDACTED]

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Russwurm:

Re: Lowering of Highway 26 Speed Limit

Thank you for your comments regarding the Highway 26 speed reduction. I will admit that the current temporary solution is not ideal. We are compiling input from all parties to complete an assessment of the situation. At the request of the Transportation Committee and as resolved by the Council of the Town of The Blue Mountains I am sending a letter to the Ministry of Transportation ("MTO") outlining the general scope of the speed reduction assessment and requesting that the MTO to provide up to \$10,000 to the Town to match the Town's budget, for a total assessment budget of up to \$20,000.

The problems on Highway 26 has been years in the making, a period during which politicians and the very experts you refer to, failed to implement any solutions. As a direct result we now have a situation where there are conflicting uses of the same stretch of road; pedestrian beachgoers, multiple entrances, and heavy volumes of high-speed traffic.

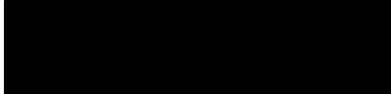
COVID-19 brought the problems which had grown and festered through years of the lack of effective action by politicians and staff at all levels of government to the breaking point. COVID-19, added additional traffic unfamiliar with the road and access points to various beaches, and created issues caused by capacity management at our beaches.

After spending part of a day with our bylaw officers at Northwinds Beach where I observed people driving at high rates of speed and passing on the shoulder, endangering both our officers, pedestrians, and vehicular traffic accessing the beach area, I wrote the premier on July 6th, 2020 and requested the speed reduction from the province. I followed up with a verbal request on a phone call with the premier on July 8th, 2020. The province was quick to act and posted the signs on July 10th, 2020.

The prompt action by the province may have already saved lives. There have been the usual accidents on this stretch of highway, however the lower speed limits have likely reduced their severity.

Is the temporary measure perfect, I would say no, but it is a first step forward. After years of apathy and inertia, we have been successful in starting to move this issue forward!

Yours Truly,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Mayor Alar Soever.

Mayor Alar Soever
Town of The Blue Mountains

CC: Council, Town of The Blue Mountains (via e-mail)
Shawn Everitt, CAO, Town of The Blue Mountains (via email)
Shawn Carey, Director of Operations, Town of The Blue Mountains (via email)
The Blue Mountains Transportation Committee (via email)
Department File - 2048