

Main Street Is Just Fine

In the last few weeks of the Advocate there have been some letters to the Editor written with opposing views on Main Street in the Village of Erin. In one letter (name withheld) the writer took a shot at the MOMMS Committee as if they were the cause of whatever problems are perceived to exist on the main drag. Jim French followed with a letter supporting that anonymous writer, then added that trucks going in and out of a local business were possibly more of a problem than the trucks travelling through the village. And finally John Bailey wrote supporting the local businesses, especially those that have been here for some time and suggested that I get involved at the historical level to try and put everything in perspective.

First of all let me state that I'm not getting in the middle of some Main Street controversy by taking sides. There's no hard and fast set of rules that one can follow when it comes to what's best for both the residents and businesses.

Some may remember a column I wrote a few years back when I stated that I didn't think the village needed a truck bypass. I took a bit of flack for that but hey; I've got broad shoulders. However, I still believe that if we reroute trucks around the village then other motorists will surely follow and many businesses that depend on visitors passing through will suffer.

In the same light I think we have to make sure that the truckers and other motorists realize that it's a privilege to drive through our wee bit of heaven and that they should drive carefully and cautiously when they do. The stop lights at the ends of the village as well as the one at Dundas and the other at Church have aided in that cause by slowing down traffic. The recent reduction in speed limit to 40 km/h has also had a similar effect. The traffic still doesn't travel 40 but I'm willing to bet it has slowed down proportionately.

I've never been a supporter of each and every one of the MOMSS initiatives but it's difficult to argue with their overall vision; that is to make the Main Street of Erin Village a safer and more pleasant place to walk, to drive and do business. In all my years of living in this municipality I can't remember a time when the street looked any better than it does now.

Some of the thanks for that belongs to the MOMSS Committee and what they have tried to do. The Erin BIA has also made a huge contribution in that regard with local businesses refurbishing their stores, and new businesses bringing in a fresh and exciting new look that seems to fit right in. The Erin Garden Club with their flourishing flowerbeds and tree-planting program add that profusion of colour and rural flavour that have been so much a part of our village over the years. The new pavement certainly helps too. As well many of the residents from one end of the street to the other have pitched in with their manicured lots and well-kept homes that make our Main Street one of the prettiest stretches of road to be found in any town or village anywhere.

My brother Ken, who was a resident in the village until some years back, was up visiting last weekend. He now lives in the States. Different times he commented, without any direction from me, on how good the village, particularly Main Street looks.

I take exception with John Bailey on one matter. I don't agree that businesses or families are entitled to special rights because they have been here longer than others. Nevertheless, longtime resident businesses, many of which were here when I arrived in the 50's and are still operating today, do deserve our respect, our continued patronage and our gratitude for sticking it out over the years through good times and bad. They have been the glue that has held the village together. We need them to continue to be an integral part of our community.

But we need the newer businesses too. Over the years some have come and gone but many of them have remained in the village and prospered. They are just as much a part of the Erin fabric and as important to the well being of our community as the patriarchal institutions. They also deserve our thanks and our continued business.

In regards to the trucks in the business core, we all know that there is no road behind the stores on the west side of the street. It's also difficult for some delivery vehicles to access businesses on the east. We've all been held up somewhat one time or another by vehicles stopped on the road while the drivers were making deliveries or by trucks backing into a business or others trying to negotiate a turn into a tight spot. But it's no big deal. It's not traffic gridlock – it's Erin for

goodness sake! It's who we are. I think it's time that we all come to realize that we live in a very unique and special place. It may not be perfect but it's about as close as you're going to get. Lighten up and enjoy it.

"Harry Smith, a former resident of the Town of Erin, is a columnist for the Erin Advocate. Some of his weekly articles relating to the Town of Erin are reproduced here."