

CSL passes 40 km/hr bylaw

*One councillor dissents, wants more 40 km/hr coverage*

By Joel Goldenberg, The Suburban, March 17, 2010

Côte St. Luc passed a bylaw last week that will limit speed on most city streets to 40 km/hr, but it's some of the 50 km/hr exceptions that prompted an opposing vote from councillor Steven Erdelyi.

Most municipalities across the island are reducing speed limits on quiet residential streets.

According to the bylaw, said Mayor Anthony Housefather, most local streets that currently have a 50 km/hr speed limit will be reduced to 40 km/hr, with the exception of school and park areas that already have a 30 km/hr speed limit. More heavily travelled streets like Fleet Road, Côte St. Luc Road, Cavendish Blvd., and Kildare, Mackle and Guelph Roads will remain at 50 km/hr.

"We will be posting new signs to reflect this," the mayor said. "We are doing this because studies have shown that the faster a car is moving when it gets into an accident with a pedestrian, cyclist or another car, the more damage is being done and those 10 kilometres an hour make a relatively sizable difference."

Councillor Glenn Nashen, in charge of the security portfolio on council, said that as chairman of the city's traffic committee, "I received a lot of letters from residents on side streets that people are going too fast. What we do find is that, often, they are not, but the perception is that they are going too fast. Obviously, lowering the speed limit by 10 will have the effect of bringing down the speed of those perceived as going too fast and those who are going slightly above the speed limit."

Nashen added that public security chief Michel Martel, who worked for the Montreal police for 29 years in the capacity of accident investigator, said that "for each 10 km/hr that the speed limit is reduced, the survival rate increases exponentially." Councillor Dida Berku said her constituents, especially parents of young children, have asked for a reduction in speeding motorists.

But Erdelyi voted against the bylaw, saying streets like Côte St. Luc Road and Kildare Road west of Westminster are narrower and in quieter areas.

"I would rather err on the side of caution," the councillor said. "I would keep Fleet, Cavendish and Côte St. Luc Road east of Westminster at 50, and leave Mackle, Kildare, Guelph and Côte St. Luc Road west of Westminster at 40."

Councillor Mitchell Brownstein disagreed, saying that a change in the limit from 50 to 40 km/hr on a street "is just a way to give the police an ability to give out tickets. If someone expects the speed limit to be 50, it should be 50. Consistency is important for the driver." He added that the exception would be 30 km/hr areas near schools and parks.

Councillor Ruth Kovac said she would vote for the bylaw, after some reflection.

"However, I don't necessarily believe that, island-wide or not, 40 km/hr is the answer. It's respect of the rules of the road, for the pedestrians that's lacking and needs to be taught, and it needs to be taught to our children to be vigilant when they're crossing the street and pedestrians when they're engaging at intersections with trucks and other cars. The people on the road need to respect stop signs and the speed limit. If anything, I think 40 km/hr is going to frustrate drivers more-so and be a cash grab for the police.

"But to be on the side of caution and safety, I will vote in favour."