

PORT HOPE MERCHANTS GROUP

This presentation is as a result of meetings and discussions held by the business owners on Walton Street, from Pine Street to Mill Street in Port Hope.

We have a number of concerns, questions and thoughts regarding the reconstruction of Walton Street that is expected to commence May 2023, budget pending.

We are under no illusions that the work must be done and as soon as possible. However, for the reasons listed below we hope to add some ideas to help mitigate what will surely be very tough on us all, especially after surviving the past few challenging years.

CONCERNS:

Communication

- We understand that there is discussion around having an 'ambassador' to keep us all informed, as well to provide ample notice for disruptions that include any kind of impediment to business access (pedestrian as well as vehicular, delivery vans etc), parking, water and power outages. A designated representative of the construction project with up-to-date knowledge who is able to answer these questions and is available to business owners is essential.
- Our request is a working committee comprised of representatives of Walton Street Business Owners, Walton Street Property owners, Walton Street Residents, Municipal Staff, a Council Member and the Chamber Of Commerce. Exact breakdown to be discussed, however we ask for a specific person at the Municipality who is responsible for maintaining and updating the timelines of the project.
This committee would in turn be representative of and responsible for communicating with their respective groups and should be enacted immediately and run its course until the completion of the project.
- We would like to see an interactive map with any traffic detours and/or pedestrian impediments on the Municipal website, especially on Tourism. We would hope to see weekly updates on the timeline and these should be distributed up and down Walton Street. Our concern is not just communication between the Municipality and the affected businesses but to the public at large. In return, we suggest that the business owners re-post on their websites and social media.
- Effective signage will be essential during this period, clear and possibly interesting signage for everything from road detours to pedestrian walkways. (Example: Huntsville used "Diggin' Downtown" as one of their catch phrases during their infrastructure reconstruction). We'd ask that signage, *even at the highway*, would exclaim LOUD & PROUD that we are open & welcoming! We do not want to send a forlorn "still open" message that's negative and unwelcoming. Let's go above and beyond creatively!

Compensation

We believe that we need to review all opportunities for subsidizing our businesses during these closures.

- Does the Municipality have insurance for business income subsidies should business be unable to operate as a direct result of this upheaval*? Is this shared with the Province? How would business owners access it?
- *Water issues include disruption and quality during this process, especially of concern for hair salons and restaurants, as well as residents of the apartments above storefronts – will there be compensation for these disruptions?
- *Telecommunications and electricity disruptions are also a major concern as we are largely accepting payments and placing orders online.
- Has the Municipality assessed and included the impact that the pandemic had on our small businesses?
- Buildings and store fronts will require extra cleaning throughout this project – we ask for compensation towards these costs and/or that the Town hire a company who will conduct an exterior cleaning (and street) as often as necessary (suggesting weekly for storefronts).
- How can we best deal with the noise and smells associated with heavy sewage construction?
- Will this disruption be reflected in property taxes? Water Taxes?
- Parking is a major concern. Aside from the fact that we all need access for deliveries – whether that means normal shipments or donations to our charities - Port Hope is a town with a demographic that includes people who cannot walk far. Is there a creative way to solve some of this problem? What about, for example, a shuttle bus if parking is 'offsite'? Or during warmer months a couple of rickshaws paid for by the Municipality? Good advertising opportunity too.

Parking remains a first priority as people who work on the 'front lines' of tourism (ie shop-and-restaurant owners) can attest. We have long sought alternative thinking in this area (for example a low-rise parking garage built behind Walton Street which could generate income as well as solve a lot of the parking issues we presently have AND be a beautiful structure). Even the working populace of downtown are challenged every day to find parking. And for those who donate their time to charities and arts programs, it starts to cost them money to do so.

Tourism

- We understand that there is presently no one helming this crucial role in Port Hope. However, one of the main components of our small businesses surviving, even in a normal environment, is Tourism. We live within an hour of Canada's biggest city but if we aren't careful and proactive with our image, visitors are just as likely to continue down the 401 to the County – which has done a splendid job of promoting itself into one of the premier tourism destinations within driving distance! It only took a power outage on Saturday in Wellington for customers to come back to Port Hope to spend their day. Imagine what will happen with a torn-up main street for two years.

- Tourism and marketing should play an integral role in the survival of our small businesses. Affected businesses should be promoted on, for example, detour signage. We could create events that attract our local populace to downtown – because surprisingly there are still people who live here and/or within a 20-minute drive who do not frequent downtown. Online shopping is only one of our challenges!
Shop Local should be reinforced with creative local media.
- Community engagement: We could offer the pipes and storm sewers that are sitting waiting to be put in place, for art contests “Paint Your Own Pipe!” – and once sunk they become 'time capsules'. Perhaps Critical Mass could become involved. Perhaps an auction for “your” pipe. Could we create appealing draws, monthly gift certificates, small events to keep the street lively?
- Visitors should know that Port Hope is thriving, open for business, still the cutest town in all the world – because we took a tough situation and turned it into 'fun'...we need a creative Tourism Manager and the funds to drive traffic for us. What about advertising in Watershed and Grapevine as a possibility? Because finally, while we do have a wonderful local customer base, we need the visitor dollar to survive, and the busy season coincides with “construction season”. Port Hope needs the vibrant main street, interesting shops and restaurants and the people behind them to continue to attract those visitors!

Logistics

- We understand that there is no staging plan at this time. We hope to be made fully aware of those stages once the budget has been approved so we can begin our own proactive process (such as our social media).
- We understand that all aesthetic upgrades to the streetscape have been voted down. However, we see this upheaval as the perfect time to update the street according to the traffic flow of both pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Although the specific proposals may not have been acceptable, surely we could consider other creative ways to keep our main street lovely? This is a missed opportunity for improving and upgrading more than sewers!
- Some updates to the ongoing concern of a public toilet being added to the downtown core area should be addressed when the time to add infrastructure for is financially advantageous.
- During construction, will there be garbage receptacles? Will they be regularly monitored and emptied?
- How is garbage collected?
- Can waiting pipes & concrete storm sewers be stored offsite (if so, where?) or will they be on Walton Street?
- Will any of the side streets (John, Queen, Ontario, Cavan) be closed during this process?
- Will there be police presence in order to assist in traffic detours and manage any congestion?
- How much notice can we expect for disruptions?

- It has been suggested that those businesses with back door access should allow customers access to the business that way.
There are several points for discussion:
 1. most of the back alleys are not in good or even very safe shape or lit well.
 2. almost everyone would have to apply some decoration/paint/repaving walkways and would there be funds available to help to do so in the event that business owners agreed?
 3. accessibility is obviously a major concern – behind some of the buildings is gravel, for example, not an ideal surface for wheelchairs or people with canes/walkers etc., and sometimes stairs are the only access.
 4. many businesses use the rear of their space as kitchen, storage, private staff space and having customers come through would not be viable or safe.
 5. This could adversely affect our insurance rates.
 6. not all businesses have rear entries.
- Detours/signage should make every effort to keep traffic flow safely close to the downtown rather than directing past the entire core. As we understand that there will be block-by-block construction, detours should retain as much traffic as possible in the core.
- In reviewing, for example, Picton's construction schedule (attached) – which appears to be similar in scope - why is Walton Street projected as a two-year shut-down?

In closing, our group has reached out to other municipalities and it is from their experiences, successes and failures, as well as the collective ideas from our group, that we were able to shape our concerns into this document.

We would not feel the need to get so involved if the projected project was a matter of months. We need a voice in the next stage of Port Hope's growth. It is unwise to continue to ignore the people who work so very hard to keep our town the vibrant, wonderful home and workplace that it is. We love Port Hope and want to continue to contribute to its well-being. We need the Municipality to support us!

In short, our requests:

- Communication, signage
- Compensation
- Tourism, upbeat marketing
- Questions and concerns addressed in an open and ongoing engagement

Thank you for your time.

The Port Hope Merchants Group
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June 27, 2022

The reconstruction of Picton Main Street between Bridge Street and Johnson Street will begin on Monday, July 4.

The scope of the project includes the following work:

- Replacement of the existing sanitary sewer and services
- Replacement of the existing watermain and services
- Storm sewer replacement
- Complete road reconstruction with new curb and gutters, sidewalks, asphalt pavement, and decorative street lighting

RW Tomlinson Limited, the contractor for this project, will complete the work in phases to minimize the impact to pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

Phase 1: July 4 until July 25

Initial construction will begin at the Bridge Street intersection with sewer installation on Bridge Street.

Traffic impact: The section of Picton Main Street between Bridge Street and the south side of Paul Street will be closed to traffic with detour routes in place. Traffic will be detoured via Picton Main Street, Walton Street, King Street, Paul Street to Picton Main Street. [View the detour map](#)

Phase 2: July 25 until August 15

Picton Main Street between Bridge Street and the south side of Paul Street will be closed to traffic and the intersection of Paul Street and Picton Main Street will be open to northbound and southbound traffic.

Traffic impact: Traffic will be detoured via Picton Main Street, Walton Street, King Street, Paul Street to Picton Main Street. [View the detour map](#)

Phase 3: August 15 until September 1

Picton Main Street between Bridge Street and Paul Street will be closed to traffic including the intersection of Picton Main Street and Paul Street.

Traffic impact: Northbound and southbound traffic will be detoured via Picton Main Street, Walton Street, King Street, Paul Street, Jane Street, Queen Street, Johnson Street to Picton Main Street. [View the detour map](#)

Phase 4: September 1 until September 12

Picton Main Street between Bridge Street and the south side of Paul Street will be closed to traffic. Construction begins on Picton Main Street north of Paul Street.

Traffic impact: Northbound traffic permitted on Picton Main Street from Paul Street to Johnson Street. Traffic will be detoured via Picton Main Street, Walton Street, King Street, Paul Street, Jane Street, Johnson Street. [View the detour map](#)

Phase 5: September 12 until October 21

Picton Main Street between Bridge Street and Paul Street will be open to northbound and southbound traffic.

Traffic impact: Northbound traffic between Paul Street and Johnson Street permitted and southbound traffic will be detoured via Picton Main Street, Johnson Street, Jane Street, Paul Street to Picton Main Street. View the detour map

Phase 6: October 21 until November 14

Picton Main Street will be closed to through traffic between the north side of Paul Street through the intersection of Johnson Street.

Traffic impact: Traffic will be detoured via Picton Main Street, Paul Street, Jane Street, Queen Street, Johnson Street, Gladstone Street, Maple Street, to Picton Main Street. View the detour map

Click here to learn more. For more information, contact the County of Prince Edward at 613.476.2148 ext. 1023, 613.962.9108 ext. 1023, or info@pecounty.on.ca.