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To: Mayor and Members of Council, Town of The Blue Mountains

Cc: Corrina Giles, Municipal Clerk; Carrie Fairley, Deputy Clerk

Subject: For Council's Consideration – Traffic Congestion and Safety in Thornbury and Along Highway 26

TOWN OF THE BLUE MOUNTAINS
PER: _____

I am writing out of concern for traffic congestion in Thornbury, particularly at the main intersection of Bruce and Arthur. At peak times, vehicles back up past Elgin Street and all the way to the top of Bruce Street hill. Pedestrians crossing at this intersection only add to the delays and, at times, safety risks.

As the Town considers additional residential development, it is important to recognize that our current traffic network is already strained. Without proactive measures, congestion and safety issues will only worsen. This affects not only drivers and pedestrians, but also emergency responders who rely on clear, efficient routes through the heart of town.

On a personal note, I recently had a near-miss at the Highway 26 / Grey Road 113 intersection at Goldsmith's corner. I came to a stop at Grey Road 113 and Highway 26 heading north, intending to turn toward Meaford. To my left, there was no obvious traffic approaching from the Meaford side, while four cars were coming from Thornbury. After the fourth car cleared the intersection, I checked left again, saw no vehicles, and noticed a black SUV exiting Goldsmith's. I pulled out and suddenly a fast-moving car was upon me, headed directly toward my driver's door. The driver made no attempt to slow down. It was only luck that prevented a collision. This is a dangerous intersection, where vehicles often approach at highway speeds near 100 km/h. Compounding the risk, drivers sometimes use the Highway 26 turning lane to bypass slowing vehicles, creating further hazards for those turning onto Grey Road 113.

Recently, around 4:30 p.m., I was again travelling out of Thornbury. Traffic was backed up on the bridge in both directions—no one was moving except pedestrians. It appeared that the combination of both traffic lights being active simultaneously contributed to the gridlock. "The fish must have been jumping"—but so were the nerves of anyone trying to drive through town.

This raises serious concerns for emergency vehicle access. How does a fire truck reach Lora Bay, or an ambulance reach the hospital from subdivisions on the southeast side of Thornbury? This is not simply an inconvenience; it is a growing public safety risk.

While Town staff can evaluate traffic improvements on local roads, Highway 26 is under the Ministry of Transportation's jurisdiction. The Province's 2015 Highway 26 Needs Assessment is now outdated. Since then, Thornbury has seen continued growth, with more

development on the way. It is time to request that the Province update that assessment and widen its focus to include congestion in the heart of Thornbury as well as safety at key intersections like Grey Road 113.

The Ministry is already proceeding with signals at Grey Road 2 and illumination at Grey Road 113, but these are modest safety upgrades. They will not address congestion at Thornbury's core intersection, nor will they prepare us for the traffic increases that new housing will bring. Now is the time to discuss stronger solutions, such as roundabouts, lane reconfigurations, and better intersection designs, while land may still be available.

I am asking Council to take a proactive stance:

1. Direct staff to study near-term traffic options for Thornbury's main intersection (Bruce & Arthur);
2. Work with Grey County and the Province to initiate an updated Highway 26 Needs Assessment that addresses both congestion in Thornbury and safety along the corridor; and
3. Forward this correspondence to MPP Brian Saunderson and the appropriate committee at Grey County Council for their consideration and follow-up.

Our community cannot afford to fall further behind on planning for traffic congestion and safety.

Sincerely,

Dr. Robert MacDairmid

