

I have lived in downtown Hamilton for more than 20 years. I have raised my child here, and I have run my small business here. My family has lived on Cannon Street East for more than 20 years, on one of the City's busiest truck routes, and we know all about what that means. Data about pollution is very academic, but to real people it means not being able to open the windows in fine weather because of the black grit that blows in. Data about the illnesses caused by this pollution is very interesting and makes a colourful chart, but to real people it means days missed from work and school, trips to the hospital, and much added stress.

It is very disheartening to see our lives treated as though they are of exactly equal value to the profit margin of a few large businesses. The feedback from the City's "Industry partners" seems like little more than a threat - let us continue to drive our 18-wheelers past your home, or our "added expenses" will be "passed along."

Time and again, residents and community associations, experts and medical professionals, have put forth the very simple request to remove residential streets from the City's official truck routes. The response has been increasingly complicated plans - six alternatives now. There are charts and maps and diagrams, and there are a lot of pictures of trucks of different types. The report is comprehensive.

Staff's recommendation is a complicated version of residents' simple request. Option 5, the ring road concept. For some reason, however, staff's recommendation still includes many residential areas as sacrifice zones - including Fennel Avenue, York Boulevard, and parts of Barton Street, Sherman Avenue, Upper James, Ottawa and Gage, and many others. Exactly why this should be made more complicated is unclear.

Here is the simple version: from the industrial north end of the City, large trucks can move eastbound on Nikola Tesla Boulevard onto the QEW. From there, they can travel east or west, or onto the Linc via the Redhill. Burlington, Guelph, Toronto, Niagara, London and beyond can all be reached this way. There is absolutely no need for industrial trucks to be anywhere near residential streets in downtown Hamilton, on the mountain, or in any of the other greater Hamilton communities.

It should go without saying that delivery and work vehicles, such as garbage trucks and grocery store deliveries, are not included in this necessary prohibition.

Once residential areas have been officially removed from the Truck Route Master Plan, our streets can be changed. We can have complete streets, that no longer need to be over-large to accommodate enormous trucks. We can improve our active transportation. We will feel safer, and healthier. Imagine that.

Hamilton might indeed become the best place to raise a child and age successfully.