

16th widening foes must wait to speak

BY SEAN PEARCE
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Don't call us, we'll call you.

That was the message to Markham residents who made their way up to Thursday's York Region council meeting to speak against the plan to widen 16th Avenue.

Council members, including Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti, said they appreciated that concerned citizens attended, but said there might be a better time and place to voice their concerns.

"All of (Markham) council is on the same page on this... We realize, in this day and age, that when we look at an issue such as (16th Avenue) we have to have a comprehensive approach," he said. "But I don't know if there's a need to go into it at length this morning."

A resolution by Markham council to review the widening plan has been presented to the regional transportation and works committee and a new report it on its way.

Markham Regional Councillor Gordon Landon noted council can't respond to deputations until it has the report.

Those who made the journey to Newmarket from Markham said being told to

keep quiet for the time being was a little irksome, but the important thing is the region is considering options other than widening the road.

"I'm a little frustrated, because I had some good stuff for the staff, which I was going to bring up today," Preserve 16th Avenue Action Committee founder Peter Miasek said.

"It's like they've gone into this without looking at all of the options. They really need to push the envelope and I don't think they are."

Mr. Miasek said he wants a public advisory committee set up so citizens could get more involved in the process.

That way, even if widening the roads did come out to be the best option, he'd feel a lot more confident that all other avenues had been explored.

Vice president of the Ward One (South) Thornhill Residents Inc., Evelin Ellison, said she had found newspaper clippings from nearly a decade ago outlining plans to widen roads, such as 16th Avenue, and create high occupancy vehicle lanes.

"You'd think by this time we'd have more knowledge and we'd not be making the same decision as nine years ago," she said.