

Anything but Maley – Sudbury Meeting hears:

Sudbury Star article by Mary Katherine Keown – Friday March 11th 2016 on meeting held by Friendly to Seniors – Sudbury at the Parkside (Older Adult Centre) on Thursday March 10th

Tom Price, a project manager and analyst, presented a series of alternative road projects he believes the city should pursue in place of the Maley Drive extension.

The projects Price outlined run the gamut from Fielding Road; Municipal Roads 4, 55 and 35; Lorne Street; the Hawthorne Drive and Barrydowne Road extensions, to upgrades to Howey Drive and Bancroft Drive, as well as the remediation of flooding along the Worthington Road.

Price, a vocal critic of Maley Drive, underscored throughout his presentation the ways in which Maley Drive will undermine Sudbury's bottom line, cost taxpayers unnecessary money and pull resources from more beneficial projects. David Robinson, an economics professor at Laurentian University, was clear. In his mind, Maley Drive is a bad idea. "Tom presented very strong evidence that Maley Drive is a loss as a project. It scores pretty high negative points and there are at least a dozen other projects that score positive points," Robinson said. "So, if you took Maley Drive off the table and substituted eight or nine of the other projects that you could buy with the same money, you'd be miles ahead. So, he's basically shown that Maley Drive is a bad decision, in terms of what people want, which is getting the roads fixed up."

The only good argument for Maley Drive, Robinson continued, is that the city could receive more than \$50 million from the federal and provincial governments. "They claim it's shovel-ready, but there are all kinds of projects that should be shovel-ready, and if they aren't, if they can't take them to the federal infrastructure program, that means the engineering department is incompetent," Robinson argued. "It probably means they've been refusing to do the studies and the preparation for these projects, because they don't want to compete with Maley Drive."

With a current price tag of more than \$80 million (for phase one), a three-way cost-sharing agreement would see the provincial and federal governments each contribute \$26.7 million, with the municipality topping up the rest. An April 2014 background study on development charges, prepared by Hemson Consulting Ltd., indicates the city's portion of the project could balloon to more than \$41 million.

According to the mayor's chief of staff, Melissa Zanette, the city has set aside nearly \$10.5 million for the project. The Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce contends it will create about 1,400 jobs (the city estimates 780 jobs in construction during phase one) and will contribute more than \$150 million to the city's gross domestic product. Mayor Brian Bigger says completion of phase one will mean an added \$88.8 million to the city's GDP.

"The benefits are negligible, economically, the benefits are very small," Robinson said. "Almost all the benefits will go to a very small number of people in the Coniston area, and the rest of the city pays -- every man, woman and child -- \$1,000 ... Nobody south of Elm Street is going to get even \$25 worth of benefit out of Maley Drive. So it's a huge transfer for a project that benefits very few people and doesn't add any jobs to the city." Most of the jobs that would be created would actually go to contractors and workers from outside the city, Robinson said. But, many of the other 12 projects Price outlined would use local crews and would do more for the local economy.

John Lindsay, another opponent of Maley Drive, said Thursday he hopes to continue looking at alternatives to the project. "These other alternatives are more attractive and we hope to be talking to our MPs and MPPs, and trying to get to as many councillors as possible," he said. "This would be the largest project ever undertaken in Sudbury and we think there needs to be more analysis. All we've heard from the city is that we need to do Maley Drive, and 'maybe that we'll do some of these other projects, as well, and maybe we'll find the money,' but we're talking about an incredible amount of money."

Lindsay said species-at-risk could halt or slow down the project. He was coy about which endangered species are near the Maley Drive corridor -- and said the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change will not identify them for fear collectors will go into the area -- but referenced "a four-legged creature with a shell." "There is a possibility that there are endangered species within the floodplain of Junction Creek -- we know they're there and that could be a concern," he said. "If the species are identified and the city cannot get an order to destroy their habitat, then it's a possibility the project could be on hold for quite some time. ... The city does not have that order yet. Is it morally responsible to go into an area and remove other species for the benefit of our own species?"