

Highway incidents prompt mayoral safety coalition



By Chris Houston

Mayor Carolyn Amyotte voiced her frustration over the traffic backlog during a North Kawartha Township council meeting on Aug. 13. "An 18 kilometre stretch of traffic backed up is not acceptable at any time," Amyotte said, addressing concerns over the ongoing road construction near Eels Creek, where traffic has been reduced to one lane. Councillor Colin McLellan echoed the mayor's concerns, citing unsuccessful attempts to obtain meaningful updates from the road contractors. He also highlighted safety concerns about the road surface and traffic light timing. "I can't say I'm terribly impressed with the service delivery on this project," McLellan said. The council suspended its procedural bylaws to pass a motion on the issue. Councillor Jim O'Shea expressed his own frustrations after being caught in the weekend traffic jams that have become routine in the area. Mayor Amyotte, seeking a broader coalition to address the issue, requested council approval to reach out to other mayors of municipalities along Hwy 28. She noted the increasing number of fatal accidents in the townships north of North Kawartha. "There have been fatal accidents in the townships north of us," she warned. Her comments came a day after the Ontario Provincial Police East Region issued a press release urging motorists to exercise greater caution on the roads. The OPP stated that: "There have been several fatal motorcycle collisions recently across eastern Ontario, bringing the total number of deaths on OPP-patrolled roadways this year to 11. That's up from eight at this time last year." The Bancroft Times reported on Aug. 14 that two motorcyclists died in separate collisions near Kawartha Dairy on Aug. 6, and two more died in another crash on Aug. 3. OPP spokesperson Bill Dickson emphasized that fatal collisions are not always the fault of motorcyclists. "Fatal collisions, or ones resulting in serious injuries, are not solely the responsibility of the motorcycle riders. In many cases, the drivers of cars or trucks are at fault," Dickson said. He added that the primary causes of motorcycle collisions include excessive speed, failure to yield the right of way, unsafe passing, or riders losing control. Most of these incidents occur on highways rather than at intersections. Superintendent Darryl Sigouin echoed these concerns, stating, "Everyone wants to get to their destination safely, but everyone operating a vehicle on roads and highways, whether it has two wheels or more, must take responsibility for their driving behaviour." In light of these concerns, Mayor Amyotte proposed forming a coalition with mayors from Douro-Dummer, Selwyn, Highlands East, Faraday, and Bancroft to lobby the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario, local police, and MPPs for more effective action. The council passed a motion supporting her plan. The OPP also reported an incident the previous evening involving a motorcycle without a license plate. The rider fled the scene, but a 23-year-old man from Bancroft was later arrested. He faces multiple charges, including flight from a peace officer, dangerous operation, and possession of a Schedule III substance.