

# BIRCHCLIFF SPEED LIMIT FEEDBACK - 2020

- Thank you for this excellent news about the 40 kmph speed limit! This will be safer not only for people, but also for animals. (I'm thinking of the doe and fawn whose quiet beauty was so magical this year, as in other years). Our family is now into a fourth generation of "Lakers" who love being in this treasured place in all seasons. Thank you for the works you and your administration staff continue to do for the well-being of Birchcliff SV.
- For the purposes of this discussion, I will assume that the purpose of the council decision for the change of speed limit to 40kmph was 'safety for all residents and visitors.' My preference for this response is to list "pros" of increasing the speed limit to 50 kph, and then the "pros" of maintaining the speed limit at the current 40 kph.

## **Pros of increasing the speed limit to 50 kph.**

Obviously, there must be some good 'pros' because a petition with many signatures was presented to Council requesting this speed limit change. Unfortunately, no 'pros' or reasons were given in the petition presented. Perhaps there were too many to list, or? Perhaps some of the following might be the 'pros' and reasons, and therefore the reason(s) for the petition. Maybe:

Some residents believe that the Stantec report indicated that the speed limit should be 50 kmph. I have heard some residents say this.

- o There is a statement like that in the report – when it is read out of context (see Stantec report – section 4 and Executive Summary). It indicates *“Based on the road characteristics, the recommended speed limit is 50km/hr.”* The following sentence reads *“However, design speed is frequently set at 10 km/h above the proposed posted speed in order to provide for drivers exceeding the posted speed by that amount.”* The report then concludes *“Considering the findings above, the Summer Village should consider the posted limit to be reduced to 40km/hr except for the section between Birchcliff Way and Range Road 15 which is posted 30km/hr for local traffic only.”*

The speed limit has been at 50kph for years, and there have not been any major incidents.

- o While this may be true, in the almost twelve (12) years that we have lived here there seems to be quite an increase in vehicular traffic on Birchcliff Road. More people now live here full time and that leads to more pedestrian and cycle traffic. There seems to be an increase in summertime traffic. We also seem to be getting an increased amount of traffic that cuts through the village to go North on RR 1-5.

It will take less time to make to drive out to RR 1-4 with a 50kph speed.

- o This is also true. In fact, I believe that the calculation shows that it will take about one (1) minute and twelve (12) seconds less to drive from the end of Birchcliff Road to RR 1-4 if the speed limit is increased to 50kph and that speed can be maintained over that distance.

A walking path is being built, and that will take pedestrians and cyclists off the road.

- o This is also true. When the walking path will be completed for the full length of Birchcliff Road is still an unknown. We do know that it will take several years, so pedestrians and cyclists will still be on Birchcliff Road for many years.

The increase will give increased safety for traffic and pedestrians on Birchcliff Road.

- o If the speed limit is changed back to 50 kph as it was previously, it doesn't seem logical that any safety considerations would change.

That's the way it was before, and we don't want it to change.

- o I rather doubt that this is one of the potential reasons for the requested change because as we are all very aware the only 'constant' in this world is 'change'. The elected council must continually evaluate and make changes as necessary to do the right things for the Village.



Others?

Perhaps there are other great reasons for this petition requesting a speed limit increase to 50kph. I certainly would be interested in hearing them.

***Pros of maintaining the speed limit at 40kph.***

Increase in road safety on Birchcliff Road.

- Several concerns have been expressed to our council by residents in the past about the safety of the previous 50kph speed limit on Birchcliff Road.
- The report from Stantec commissioned by council pointed out several deficiencies in Birchcliff Road. (see Stantec Report – Section 2)
  - Several ‘blind corners’
  - Many hidden driveways
  - Several drops in level of the road that contribute to ‘sight line issues’
  - Lack of sufficient shoulder area in several sections
  - Power poles too close to the road to meet safety standards
  - Pedestrians and cyclists
  - On-street parkingKeeping the speed limit at 40 kph would help to mitigate some of these deficiencies.
- We often walk on Birchcliff Road in the summertime. When traffic approaches, from either direction, we try and walk in single file. Regardless of how we walk on the road, there have been several times when the speed limit was 50 kph when we have had to move into the ditch because of the unsafe operation of a vehicle. Usually, they were going too fast for the conditions, and sometimes they just failed to move over to allow for pedestrians.
  - There are several ‘blind corners’ and some dips in the road where drivers cannot see pedestrians on the road. Pedestrians can hear the cars coming, but that doesn’t help them. We have almost been hit several times at ‘blind corners’.
- Several times when driving on Birchcliff Road with the speed limit at 50kph, we have almost been hit at blind corners by other vehicles coming too fast, and ‘cutting the corner’. We have also had vehicles come out of ‘hidden driveways’ in front of us. Fortunately, we were not moving that quickly, and were able to stop in time.
- As more people move here to live on a more permanent basis, these incidents will become more common. How long will it be until we have a serious incident with a pedestrian, a cyclist, or a vehicle?

**Other considerations**

I have been told, although I have not personally checked that the other four (4) Summer Villages have a speed limit of 40 kph.

The Town of Sylvan Lake has a speed limit of 40 kph. except along the lakeshore where it is 30 kph. Some major cities, including the City of Edmonton are considering dropping their speed limit in residential areas to 40 kph. for safety reasons.

Maybe some residents are upset that the change was made without a plebiscite first, but don’t we elect councils and boards to make those important decisions?

**Conclusion**

At this point, from my perspective, there is no valid ‘pros’ or good reasons to undertake the change to increase the speed limit to 50 kph as requested in the petition sent to Council. I am very open to considering any valid reasons and look forward to hearing them.

Carefully reading the Stantec report and considering their statements in context, it seems fairly clear to me that they recommend a 40kph speed limit for Birchcliff Road.

Are we, as a community, not willing to give less than a minute or two a day per trip when we drive Birchcliff Road to ensure more safety on our roads, or will we wait until there is some serious incident before we decide to have a posted speed limit of 40kph?

- We can think of absolutely no advantages, pros or benefits to the previous 50km/hour speed limit along Birchcliff Road in the Summer Village of Birchcliff. We were very relieved and pleased when the speed limit on Birchcliff Road was lowered to 40km/hour (which by Stantec's professional perspective and reality check, unfortunately equates to 50 km/hour). Our grandchildren, who are now 11 and 12, have never been allowed to bike or walk along Birchcliff Road, occasionally even with supervision, as it seems quite perilous and unpleasant with the sometimes heavy traffic load plus the omnipresent heavy-footed driver (in a hurry to where?), making the walk or bike-ride quite worrisome, which is so unfair and frustrating to many, especially those like us who remember how Birchcliff Road was before it was paved...i.e., an enjoyable, quiet, scenic, country roadway. We have read over the Stantec letter and agree with everything that has been well detailed and rationalized. Therefore, we hope that clear foresight, logic and common sense will prevail in the upcoming voting opportunity. We also greatly appreciate the hard work and diligent efforts done on our behalf by our Birchcliff Council members regarding this issue...and others!
- Until such time as a dedicated walking path is built along Birchcliff Road, I am in favor of the reduced speed limit that is currently in place. I would also be in favor of increased policing of that speed limit as very few people honor it right now.