



Communities told to get ready for future without cars

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TORONTO — Towns and cities must start planning ahead for a future where the car is a thing of the past, and a first step toward that reality would be creating more public transit for communities, says a new report by the Ontario Professional Planners Institute.

Municipalities must be forward-thinking enough to address their current needs without saddling future leaders with problems that are difficult to fix, said institute president Wayne Caldwell.

He said there must be an emphasis on building transportation networks and curbing problems with urban sprawl, which is contributing to obesity and has the potential to reduce life expectancy for future generations.

“We need to look at the opportunities to focus on building transit . . . realizing that the things that have driven us in the past, particularly related to the automobile, are things of the past,” Caldwell said.

“It’s not to say that automobiles won’t be important in the future, but I think we all have an awareness and appreciation of the increasing energy costs and the congestion that flows out of that and the need to do things differently in the future.”

Institute president-elect Sue Cumming said communities should work to make life more pedestrian-friendly so people can go about their lives without having to rely on cars.

The report, entitled “Healthy Communities, Sustainable Communities,” suggests about 2.4 million Ontario residents live in areas where they have few options for transportation beyond a car because that’s just the way many communities have been designed.

The report also suggests fewer children are likely to walk to school today compared to past generations, and that has an effect on their health.