

OPINION

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What's the standard?

News of eight Greater Toronto Area (GTA) driving schools having their licences pulled for handing out beginner driver education certificates to students who hadn't completed their training raises questions about provincial standards for the industry.

Our roadways are already congested enough with too many drivers who believe they own the road and demonstrate it through aggressive and dangerous behaviour behind the wheel.

Adding novice drivers, who haven't completed the minimum training required by the Ontario Ministry of Transportation, is a recipe for a traffic fatality.

Equally troubling is that the ministry removed 22 businesses from its list of approved driving schools last year.

These recent developments raise the question, should Ontario be raising the bar on the minimum requirements for businesses that are preparing novice drivers to face today's concrete jungle?

Last week's comments by Ministry of Transportation Jim Bradley offered no hint that the driving school licensing process will be reviewed or overhauled. He made no mention of how these eight apparently slipped through the cracks of Ontario's driver training certification process.

According to the province, there are 418 licensed course providers of beginner driver education in Ontario as well as 278 high schools that deliver ministry-approved courses.

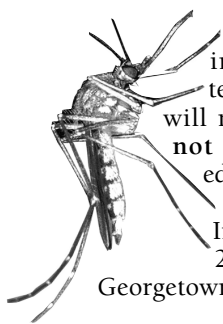
These schools graduate more than 100,000 novice drivers each year.

Before paying for driver training, the province recommends parents and novice drivers get the following information when selecting a driving school:

- Ask friends or co-workers for recommendations;
- Check Ontario's Consumer Beware List for information on driving schools. They should also register any problems with a driving school on that site;
- Choose a driving school from the list of ministry-approved Beginner Driver Education course providers;
- Ask to meet with instructors before making any payments;
- Visit Ontario's Consumer Protection Branch for more advice on how to make a smart decision when purchasing a good or service.

Something bugging you?

Send us a letter!



Letters to the editor must include an address and daytime telephone number. Unsigned letters will not be published. Letters should not exceed 200 words and may be edited for content and/or length.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Region must say no to Province's plan

Dear editor,
We attended the recent Sustainable Halton workshop in Georgetown.

The Evaluation Framework Workbook assumes that Halton must grow as fast as the province dictates. Halton should stand up and say NO to the province for the following reasons.

- The proposed growth is NOT sustainable environmentally, socially or financially.
- We need to preserve what is some of the best farm land in Canada. The province must compensate farmers to keep agriculture viable.

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- We don't want excessive growth here. It should be spread out more evenly throughout the whole country.

- We don't want Lake Ontario water.

- Why plan if the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) and developers override the best-made plans?

- Will the province pay for the associated infrastructure costs, over and above what development charges cover? While development charges may cover much of the regional

costs, I understand that they do not nearly cover the Town's costs.

Beverly and Read Whatmough,
Georgetown

A satisfied customer

Dear editor,
We are constantly being urged to shop locally to help boost the local economy. As a resident of Georgetown for the past 43 years I have tried to honor this commitment and have not been disappointed.

Most recently I engaged the services of Landscapes By Design to construct a retaining wall on my property and to rebuild the fence. Jamie Kelman, the landscape horticultural technician was prompt in answering my first call, giving me a quote and assuring me that the job would be done within two weeks. Due to a freeze-up in the weather, the job was delayed by a few days and I thought I might have to wait until the spring thaw for its completion. However, Jamie, true to his word, showed up in sub-zero weather to finish the project.

We do, from time to time, hear stories of trades people not returning calls, doing shoddy work, etc. These people will not last long as word of mouth soon spreads as to the reliability of their business ethics. I heartily endorse Landscapes By Design and, in particular, Jamie Kelman.

Cathy Halovanic,
Georgetown

Kay d'Entremont,
Georgetown

Format of Sustainable Halton meeting flawed

Dear editor,
A public information meeting was recently held by Halton Region regarding Sustainable Halton.

It should have been an open forum with the facilitators managing the meeting and the public enjoying an open debate.

Upon entry, everyone was given a workbook, which was to be finished at a later time. This meeting was theoretically an information session and an opportunity for the public to become involved and present its views. The session was opened with a presentation, followed by a short question period. (This should have been the whole meeting).

The presentation was given by a very skilled independent facilitator but the nitty-gritty of the proposals were not covered. The public was

then broken into smaller groups, each with a facilitator, and each person in the group voiced their opinion and the facilitator then presented the groups' views to the entire audience (this watered down the effects of people's statements).

If the independent facilitator had worked through the workbook and let the public discuss each point this would have been an open debate and dialogue. As one person commented, this sort of meeting is "smoke and mirrors".

This was a public meeting where people came to ask questions about Sustainable Halton and therefore this should have been a question and answer format. The public needs information; let the people speak.