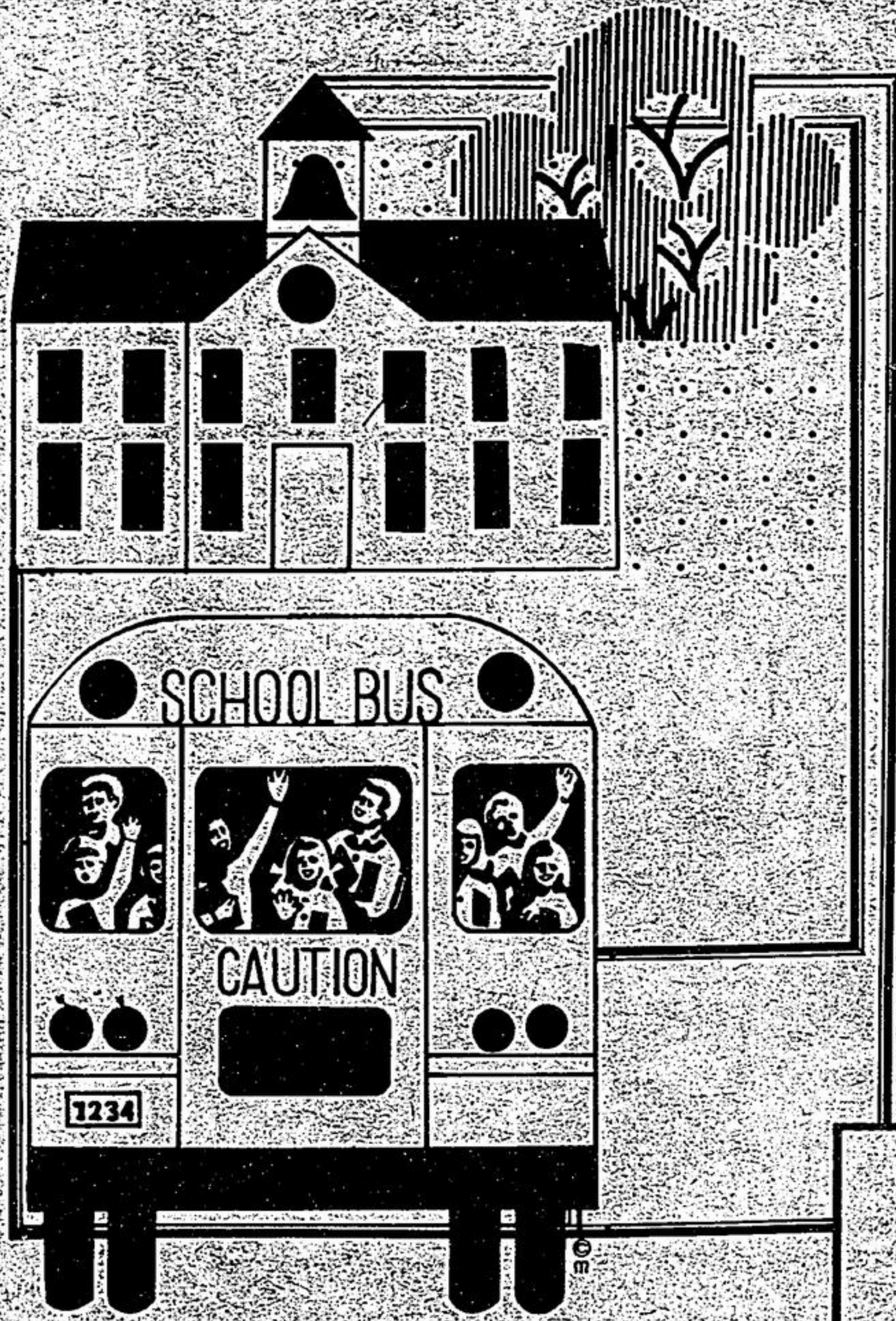


# Let's Go to School Safely!

**Bus drivers say:**

## 'Be careful out there'



Despite extensive efforts to educate the public on school bus safety, many drivers are still failing to stop when confronted by the flashing lights and stop signs of a bus which is picking up or dropping off students.

Carol Moore, of All-Way Transportation in Gormley, believes that in most cases, drivers just aren't paying sufficient attention to what's happening around them. "People have to be more alert. If they've been surprised by anything that happens while they're driving, then they're not being careful enough."

Safety is the number one priority for bus drivers, she stresses, and rigorous training is provided to ensure that they take every precaution when they're operating a school bus. "They have an extensive training period. They go out on the road with driver trainers, and they have classroom

instruction of all kinds as well."

Constable Wayne Snooks of the York Regional Police Community Services department, chairs safety meetings for all drivers in York Region, she adds. "We're all working to attain the same safety standards for the children, because it's so important."

Educating the children themselves is also emphasized. "They have classroom instruction and the drivers talk to them about safety. They're told they have to sit on the bus and not walk around, because they can get hurt." However, no amount of student and driver education can protect them from a reckless motorist, and the penalties for violations are stringent.

If a car fails to obey bus signals, explains Ms. Moore, "the drivers write down as much information as they can about the vehicle, including the licence plate number, and submit the information to the police." From that point the police take over, she says.

"I don't think motorists are aware of what can happen if they ignore the flashing lights." First time offenders face a fine of \$128.75 and a loss of six points, according to a York Regional Police spokeswoman. But far more frightening is the possibility of a tragic accident, notes Ms. Moore.

"More and more drivers are passing on the shoulder side of the road when students are getting on or off the bus, and that's when the children are totally vulnerable. We need all the help we can get from the public, because our children are a precious commodity: they're our future and we need them."



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