

## Region clamps down on unsafe driving

LISA QUEEN  
Staff Reporter

Only a handful of hot spots in York Region will be targeted under a provincial plan to clamp down on unsafe driving in school zones, police Chief Peter Scott warns. Solicitor General Jim Flaherty announced last week

municipalities will be allowed to designate traffic safety zones in areas where children congregate, such as schools, daycares and parks.

"It appears that certain drivers just haven't got the message yet that this type of behaviour is not tolerated in Ontario," Flaherty said.

Fines in the designated areas will double - \$400 for speeding or driving carelessly and \$300 for running a

amber, red or flashing light. The province is bringing in legislation that will allow the municipalities to keep revenue from the tickets.

The Tories have also created a \$150-million fund over the next five years that will allow police departments across the province to hire 1,000 new officers.

But while Scott said York will apply for an undetermined amount of the

### POLICE

funding, he warned parents not to expect permanent police patrols on streets in front of every school, daycare and park in the region.

"I would apply for anything that makes the streets safer for York Region. (But) I wouldn't envision that kind of number at all," he said.

"Each district will identify one or two zones within the area that are, because of statistics, a high area for potential danger or accidents."

Despite the drawbacks, Scott applauded the program. "It's an excellent idea. What you're actually doing is target policing. I guess you call it cost-effective policing."

Police union president Sgt. Paul Bailey also supports the plan - in theory.

But he argued dozens of new officers would have to be hired to patrol the zones properly.

"Anything we can do to look after the kids is probably one of our more paramount duties. But you have to be realistic, too. We have hundreds of schools," he said.

"I don't know how we're going to do it with the current levels of staffing." Bailey is worried the province's announcement is nothing more than a public relations move.

"If the province is really serious and wants the police to look at child safety, the police would love to do it. But you can't keep dumping on us and saying 'Do more with less'."

Bailey fears the force will only be able to police "a few hot spots" at best.

"It's nice for the government to come out with these earthy, down-at-street-level plans to help the community, but they have to be realistic."

Bailey warned the program will send out a false sense of security because residents will believe the zones are being policed around the clock.

"It sends out a false security message to the parents. They'll decrease their vigilance and the kids are out there dangling," he said.

"The government has to look past the end of their nose. Put your money where your mouth is."

less. Markham Mayor Don Cousens said the government's heart is in the right place, but said there's no use setting up rules that won't be enforced.

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