

Stouffville Tribune

A Metroland community newspaper
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EDITORIAL

Traffic safety plan welcomed

Traffic safety in York Region took a big step forward last week.

The York Regional Police Services Board gave Chief Julian Fantino the go-ahead for a \$1.3-million traffic safety strategy. This is money well spent.

Far too many local residents know first-hand the terrible impact of traffic accidents.

Any plan that proposes to make the roads safer gets our full support.

Chief Fantino will put 15 more police officers, five new cruisers, and some state-of-the-art radar sets on the region's roads.

Some may say this is too much money and personnel devoted to traffic concerns. However, one only has to consider the statistics to see how badly needed these measures are.

In the past five years, Fantino told the police board, more than 230 people have died, and more than 24,000 have been injured, in accidents on roads in the region. These include roads patrolled by both the York Region police and the Ontario Provincial Police.

Some 71,655 accidents were reported over the five-year period.

Of course, some accidents are simply unavoidable. What Fantino's strategy is hoping to achieve is an end to the crashes that can be prevented.

Chief among those would be crashes caused by aggressive driving.

Strong enforcement is the only way to get the message through to those drivers who seem to think their car is some kind of a weapon.

These are idiots who are drag racing along streets, often through busy traffic.

They are a menace to everyone on the road, and most of the crashes they get into usually end in the death of an innocent driver or pedestrians.

Along with stronger enforcement, a better understanding of road design and identification of dangerous areas will be achieved by the new traffic strategy.

"We want to dedicate people on the ground and we can't do it in piecemeal fashion," Fantino told the police board.

"The situation here begs for a very assertive, proactive response on the part of the police."

But it's not only police officers who can make a difference in this plan. Residents are also being encouraged to get involved. A toll-free "Citizens on patrol" phone line, is being considered to allow residents to report driving offences.

The other way residents can help is by being careful and considerate on the roads at all times. If we work together, it will be safer for everybody.

CHEERS, NO JEERS

■ **CHEERS:** To Stouffville resident Kathleen Gibson for telling her story about how 911 failed. The switchboard repouted her fire call to Pickering because her new number wasn't registered in the 911 databank. The situation has prompted York Region emergency services committee to ensure this glitch in the system is fixed.

■ **JEERS:** To Richmond Hill council and its secret vote to make taxpayers foot the bills for the spouses of councillors travelling on business trips. It's a ridiculous decision, and the fact that it was done in secret simply shows how cowardly these politicians have behaved.

■ **CHEERS:** To the York Region United Way fundraising efforts, which has already surpassed its halfway mark, raising \$2.1 million.

OPINION



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Adequate funding needed

Anyone who cares about the future well-being of this province must take notice of the destruction and chaos caused by the Mike Harris government and its Common Sense Revolution.

The Tories have used economically-driven reforms in the areas of education, health and social services without any thought to the impact of these reforms.

Despite a promise that classroom funding for education would be guaranteed, millions of dollars have been removed from the education budget.

When they took office in 1995, the Tories made permanent the \$425 million in cuts announced by the previous NDP government's Social Contract. On top of that, Harris has cut \$533 million.

The funding formula announced earlier this year makes a further cut of \$900 million from schools.

Any government reform of our educational system must be guided by the reality of public education.

Teachers and educational workers understand this reality. They deal with what public school students bring into the world of the classroom each day.

Clearly, there is always a need for growth and improvement in any system. There is also a need for research, for analysis and for careful planning before implementation.

Perhaps instead of spending millions of dollars of taxpayers' money on commercials and radio ads selling their reforms, that money would be better spent by restoring adequate funding for

education in this province.

COREY TRUTE
NEWMARKET

Spooky ride a success

The York-Durham Heritage Railway would like to offer a heartfelt thanks to all those who participated in our very successful, first time, spooky train ride.

A special thanks to our neighbours along the track who put on special shows and displays to thrill our riders.

BRYAN HILL
YORK-DURHAM HERITAGE RAILWAY

Liberals held back funds

Regarding your editorial on Oct. 20 *Emergency room help needed now*, which contained the following paragraph:

"We in Ontario pay a lot of tax money for health care. While we certainly don't want the system to be taken advantage of, we also expect it to work when we need it."

I believe the above statement to be true, but I think the editorial writer should have also informed readers that the Chretien Liberal government has withheld billions of Ontario tax dollars that should be slated for health and education costs.

With Ottawa holding back our tax dollars, should this be construed as a reward for Ontario sending 101 Liberal MPs to Ottawa?

J. SHAW
MARKHAM



Debora Kelly

Closing a school is not like ripping off a bandage

There's my junior high, on the Toronto District School Board's list of schools that may be closed.

Suddenly, I am remembering faces in a bustling hall; bell bottoms, clogs and guys in lumber jackets; giggles by the lockers; teachers who made a difference.

While nothing can take those memories away or lessen the way in which those experiences shaped who I am today, I felt a pang of regret that the days could be numbered for Henry Kelsey Sr. Public School.

Yet, I am more practical than sentimental when it comes to bricks and mortar. What schools give us can be cultivated anywhere.

That doesn't mean I don't sympathize with the neighbourhoods across Greater Toronto facing the devastation of having an integral part of the community ripped away from them.

It's a testimony to the education system that is under so much fire these days that schools are treasured as part of the community.

The idea of closing a school seems almost, well, blasphemous, yet I know limited funding must go where it is most needed.

Here in York Region, most schools are bursting at the seams because, until now, the needs of a community, as determined by local school boards, were approved or rejected at the whim of Queen's Park bureaucrats.

Look at York Region and you can see what a failure this method of funding was. As hard as school boards tried to responsibly plan for the future, for the phenomenal growth they knew was coming, their hands were tied. Welcome to Generation P(ortable).

The provincial government wants to solve this problem with a formula that allocates money for students, not buildings.

GTA school board representatives worked with the government — which reviewed floor plans of every school in the province — to come up with a common formula to determine capacity. A lot of work has gone into this.

Yet, once again, the Tories are in a maelstrom of bad publicity because something has been lost in the translation.

Closing schools — and hospitals — isn't like ripping off a bandage and, as right as their ideas are and as needed as reform is, they just don't seem to understand that.

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