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## York Region MPP speaks out against licence fingerprinting

BY ROY GREEN  
Staff Writer

There is little enthusiasm in York Region for including motorists' fingerprints on drivers' licences.

The Ontario government is spending up to \$50,000 to study ways to make drivers' licences harder to forge, an initiative rising from increased security concerns, but the response from police and two area MPPs is, at best, lukewarm.

Even a Liberal MPP, Thornhill's Mario Racco, is unhappy with the proposal.

"I have some real problems with that. I'm not sure what the benefits are," Mr. Racco said. "We're all drivers and 99 per cent of us are honourable people. It's wrong to make us feel like we're capable of doing something terrible."

York Regional Police Chief Armand La Barge feels there is limited merit from a police perspective. "I'm on the Ontario chiefs' association and this isn't something we've been pushing for."

"But it might prove useful in the case of an officer concerned about the true identity of a driver. It would help confirm identity," Mr. La Barge said.

Alan Shefman, a human rights consultant in Vaughan, wonders if the increased security benefits would be outweighed by civil liberty concerns. "The more information that is out there, the

more opportunities there are for a wider number of people to infringe on our privacy," Mr. Shefman said.

"On the other hand, we already provide information about ourselves for different organizations and companies to verify who we are, like our social insurance number — we give it out (freely)."

And he says the public is understandably wary about the concept of being fingerprinted.

"Fingerprint recognition has for so long been related to police and criminality. It has very negative connotations. But we've all read about the guy who has lost his licence four or five times and he's still driving. Maybe this could be useful."

Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees is also cool to the fingerprint program, but only because he believes there's a better way to increase security.

The former transport minister, whose riding includes Whitchurch-Stouffville and northern Markham, prefers a more recent innovation, facial recognition technology, being spearheaded by the Canada Bank Note company.

"After viewing the various options, we determined (facial recognition) is the most effective and most acceptable form of identification and doesn't have the same stigma that fingerprinting does," Mr. Klees said.

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