

OPINION

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Editorial

Licence restrictions improve road safety

It's welcome news the McGuinty Liberals are proposing to tighten rules of the road when it comes to Ontario's young, inexperienced drivers.

And for a government haunted by a litany of shameful broken promises, this is one move for which it should be lauded.

The province announced Tuesday it wants to pass legislation prohibiting new teenage drivers, 19 years old and younger, from having more than one youth passenger during the first six months of graduating to a G2 licence.

Teens obtain a G2 licence after one year of having an entry-level driver's permit, a graduated licensing system that has been in place for the past decade.

No one could argue these restrictions — except, young drivers — are positive steps to ensuring our roads are safer.

This latest crackdown may be an inconvenience for responsible young drivers but, in this case, we need to keep the best interests of all citizens in mind.

The changes will certainly be good news for York Regional Police, who are serving a growing population and dealing with hundreds of new young drivers each year.

"Any steps taken to make youths safer behind the wheel are great," Staff Sgt. Tom Carrique said of this week's announcement.

In York Region, police have a two-pronged situation to deal with when it comes to young drivers: inexperience and drag racing. During May and September 2003, police laid 31 12-hour driving suspensions during seven different days, targeting G2 or inexperienced drivers. Police checked 5,325 vehicles associated in one way or another with street racing, either dealing with car modifications or vehicles found in an area where street racing was taking place, Staff Sgt. Carrique said.

York officers will be out next month to kick start this year's street racing elimination campaign. Transportation Minister Harinder Takhar said Monday nearly 1,000 children and young people are killed or seriously hurt each year in Ontario, due, in large part, to the fact they weren't properly restrained in cars.

However, many car seat manufacturers offer complicated restraint systems that make it difficult and, sometimes, nearly impossible to properly install child seats. If this effort is to have real impact, car manufacturers should incorporate children's safety in vehicle designs, making built-in seats available in all new cars.

It shouldn't be an afterthought.



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

Breast cancer walk hits home with teammate

Karen Hunt knows the agony of walking 60 kilometres through the sweaty streets of Toronto on a late summer weekend.

And she wants to do it again. Only this time, it's personal.

The 43-year-old Stouffville mother of three is in training for the Weekend to End Breast Cancer Sept. 10 to 12.

She's not alone. Four months before the troops head out, the event is fully booked with 5,000 walkers. There are others from Whitchurch-Stouffville, including entire teams and individuals.

The marathon of all-power walks sends net proceeds to breast cancer research at Princess Margaret Hospital in Toronto, an international leader in the fight against the killer disease.

Karen was in the first walk that raised more than \$12 million last year. She heard a commercial on the radio and signed up. No experience with breast cancer, just a willingness to help.

That changed last month when a teammate from last year was diagnosed with breast cancer. After surgery, the Toronto woman was given the medical OK. She's planning to do the walk again, too. "You never know," Karen said. "Now we will have a survivor walking with us."

It will hard to top last year. Emotions were high: enthusiasm, excitement, sadness, pride, tiredness, but never once did anyone question why we were doing this," she said.

"We ended the first day with a shower, great meal and then dancing to a live band. You would think after walking all day, we would want to lie down and rest, but when you have such a large group of people who are so pumped and excited, the energy around you is unbelievable."

The naysayers have asked how she could walk the distance and raise the \$2,000 entry fee.

"You do not really think about how far it is when you are walking because you know the cause is very good," she said.

The money is coming in again, thanks to individuals, companies and fundraisers.

Karen is hosting a day in the alleys at the Stouffville Bowling Centre Saturday from 12 to 6 p.m. Adults bowl for a minimum donation of \$10. They can be accompanied free of charge by a child. A silent auction and raffle will also be held.

It is a great way to have fun, spend time with your family and contribute to a great cause that will help save lives," Karen said.

Jim Mason is editor of the Sun-Tribune.

Letters to the Editor

Disease preventable with screening

Re: Colon cancer screening better than alternative, May 1.

Congratulations on your front-page coverage of this important issue and congratulations to Markham Stouffville Hospital on the opening of its long-awaited endoscopy suite.

The article was informative but, unfortunately, not completely accurate. Colon cancer is the third most common cancer behind breast and prostate, but the second leading cause of cancer-related death after lung cancer.

Colon cancer is the leading cause of non-tobacco-related cancer death. Recent data suggests one in 17 Canadians will develop colorectal cancer.

This disease is preventable with proper screening and the detection of polyps that are benign and present long before cancer occurs. They are easy to remove and can be detected by screening.

We encourage people to discuss this with their physicians.

Guidelines suggest screening should begin at age 50 for average risk individuals and even earlier for those at higher risk.

We support your efforts to educate the public about this issue. Colon cancer screening is important to eradicating this potentially lethal disease.

DR. IAIN MURRAY
 DR. PATRICK PENDERGAST
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The Stouffville Sun-Tribune welcomes your letters. All submissions must be less than 400 words and must include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The Stouffville Sun-Tribune reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit for clarity and space. Write: Letters to the Editor, 34 Civic Ave., P.O. Box 154, Stouffville, L4A 7Z5, e-mail jmason@ymg.com

Council didn't listen to residents

Re: Park for snakes scares residents, April 24. An advertised public meeting on the proposal was arranged for April 14, but no attention was paid to the majority views expressed.

Attendees weren't told there is also a need to attend a council meeting to repeat the views expressed at the public meeting. Apparently council does not read public meeting reports.

Council didn't read out any petitions presented at the council meeting opposed to the proposal before voting on the issue. Is this to discourage last minute input or does council guess what the survey shows?

In our opinion, councillors weren't made knowledgeable on the issues ahead of council meetings. Too much knowledge may make for a rational decision.

Do not compromise. This shows new residents they may have a valid point of view. (Note: Councillors voted to re-naturalize Ballantrae Park without a snake hibernaculum on park property.)

For the record, we new residents are here to stay.

HELEN AND ALAN THOMPSON
 WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE

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