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LETTERS POLICY

The Sun-Tribune welcomes your letters. All submissions must be less than 400 words and must include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The Sun-Tribune reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit for clarity and space.

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OPINION



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Traffic blitz welcome

Re: Some nerve to complain about police blitz, Mason; letter to the editor by Ken Wilson, April 2.

Wow! I've learned some valuable lessons from writing a letter to The Sun-Tribune.

Lesson #1: I was surprised to see my original letter published after Councillor Hargraves confirmed council had agreed to reduce Hoover Park to 40 km/h and install stop signs at Kribs Lane.

Mayor Emmerson and councillors were understandably upset by the timing and context of my letter. So, I'd like to take this opportunity to publish a belated apology and thank you to council.

Moreover, I'd like to thank Councillor Richard Bartley for calling me to explain what happened at the council meeting which was written about in the Sun-Tribune and, in turn, prompted my letter. My perception and letter were based solely on an article written with information available to the reporter.

Lesson #2: I was surprised to see my name and quote used in the context it was referenced in Jim Mason's March 19 column about police presence. Mr. Mason was

voicing frustration with 40 km/h and police presence on a weekend near Oscar Peterson Public School as an inconvenience. My comment about radar near the school on weekends was written when a residential section of Hoover Park Drive, where children live and play on weekends, was still 50 km/h with less traffic enforcement than now.

I actually agree more with Mr. Wilson; drivers are out of hand. Plus, I agree with Mr. Wilson's comments in support of police and a job well done.

It is unfortunate my comments were taken out of context and perceived as a complaint about police doing their job. That was never my intent. In fact, I welcome this traffic enforcement to control drivers.

Lesson #3: The Sun-Tribune keeps us informed about our community and it is literally a free press. Everyone is entitled to their opinion and I now know many residents read these letters. So, if you want to be heard, then write. However, Councillor Bartley taught me that it is far more constructive to pick up the phone first and dialogue to gain the proper perspective.

BILL GRANT
STOUFFVILLE



Isn't Internet slang changing how we spell?

Maybe it's because I have an apostrophe in my last name that I am sensitive to the apparent demise of this culturally sensitive form of punctuation.

I am referring to that little squiggle, squib or wink that might go between the O and the rest of your name if you happen to be descended from people who hail from the Emerald Isle or even Scotland — the apostrophe. (We O'Neills like to call it The Mighty Apostrophe.)

I also lived in Quebec and witnessed the whole language law fight, especially as it comes to outdoor signs.

Your sign is not in French? Well then, just remove the apostrophe! Then it's not really in either official language.

Other stores removed the apostrophe and the S. Which I kind of thought was going a little too far. That's how department store Eaton's famously became Eaton — before later being eaten by the competition — and so on.

When you're a guy with an apostrophe in your name, you tended to view this whole Eaton thing as an affront.

(I always hoped they had the apostrophe stored in a warehouse somewhere and were ready to put it back up when things cooled down. Or maybe some separatist group would break in and take the apostrophe hostage, sending CSIS on an international apostrophe hunt.)

Others couldn't care a whole lot



Bernie O'Neill

either way, so long as the store had great stuff, which it did.

Still others sympathized with the idea that people who spoke French felt threatened by the sea of English around them and if they didn't do something about it, their language and culture would some day be gone.

They might even see the loss of an apostrophe as a small price to pay — minor cosmetic surgery; an odd but ultimately harmless editing job — for the right to keep doing business in a great city like Montreal (or should that be Montréal).

Even today in Quebec (or maybe that should be Québec) they'll argue whether or not they should've or shouldn't have, could've or couldn't, would've or wouldn't, can't, hadn't or didn't do the right thing when it comes to outdoor signs and the apostrophe.

Which is part of why I left — punc-

tuation consternation, the apostrophe apocalypse, or whatever you wanted to call it. It just got tiring after a while.

Even though the apostrophe has served those of us of Irish descent for centuries, it can be a bit of a pain to have an apostrophe in your last name, even in Ontario. I've had tellers unable to find my bank account and my health club membership "disappear" because my name was punched in to the computer with an apostrophe or without somewhere along the line — an apostrophe catastrophe.

An apostrophe doesn't work in e-mail addresses which makes me think there have been any number of people trying to get in touch with me who never got through or thought I was just ignoring them (long lost girlfriends wishing they could see me again, Publisher's Clearing House wanting to give me a million dollars, the Leafs looking for a goalie, as in maybe I had Cujó's cell number?).

A coffee and doughnut chain dropped the pesky punctuation years ago (the man's name was Tim Horton) and I always feel like complaining. Although the Hells Angels don't use an apostrophe and I figure that's their business.

But now I fear that the Blackberry, Facebook, MSN and cellphone texting could do in the apostrophe for good.

People e-mail me to say they cant

make it. Wont be there. Didnt know about that. And so on. Because that apostrophe is a bit of extra work that probably isn't really necessary, takes time and might even cause a crash if you're texting as you move up in the Tim Hortons drive-through.

Worse, they might not know how The Mighty Apostrophe is supposed to be used, so they don't use it.

If you ever read the thread of messages on Facebook that might have contributions from teens, you'll see abbreviations like rofl (roll on floor, laughing), lmao (laugh my arse off — I'll just use arse for the purposes of this column) — and a hundred words like it's, there's, we'll, they'll and so on, but without the apostrophes, LOL (laugh out loud). What punctuation there is on there is used to make faces, as in :) or ;) or :-).

I don't really know Morse Code, but you get the idea. The slang is pretty inventive and funny, even if it doesn't have me ROFLMAO. Now it's influencing written English. Perhaps that's why you see its when it should be it's, mens instead of men's. Close is good enough and works on a Blackberry.

Soon the apostrophe will be like the semicolon. We know it's good for something, we're just not sure what, other than to ;) (wink).

Stouffville resident Bernie O'Neill is an editor with the York Region Media Group.