

**LETTERS
POLICY**

The Sun-Tribune
welcomes your let-
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words and must include
a daytime telephone
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The Sun-Tribune reserves
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Letters to the Editor,
The Sun-Tribune

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OPINION

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Region making money off taxpayers' backs

*Re: Regional council approves
red light cameras, Jan. 24.*

The plan to move for-
ward with this program is just
another case demonstrating
York Regional council has lost
its way.

Taken purely at face value,
the program is flawed.

At a cost of \$3.7 million and
an expected fine revenue of
\$4.5 million, would it not be
safe to say if cameras reduced
the occurrence of drivers run-
ning red lights, then the reve-
nue stream from these fines
would also go down.

Alternatively, if the reason is
solely to bring in an additional
\$800,000 in revenue, then we
have more serious concerns
than lowering accident rates at
intersections.

From a Constitutional
position, since when is it the
responsibility of our elected
officials to monitor our every

HAVE YOUR SAY, WHITCHURCH- STOUFFVILLE

► What do you think of these
issues or others? E-mail letters to
the editor to jrmason@yrmg.com

movement in the hope we may
make a misstep and then profit
from it?

Do our elected officials
understand it is their neigh-
bour whose money they are
spending to finance this pro-
gram.

Seems a little ridiculous to
me.

PAUL STEVENS
NEWMARKET

*You can read letters, columns
and stories from The Sun-Tri-
bune on yorkregion.com*



Don't bet your life on right of way, pedestrians

It's a war out there.
And pedestrians are losing
the battle. Some — sadly, hor-
ribly, incredibly — with the loss
of their lives.

The number of pedestrian deaths
in York Region has steadily increased in
the last decade and skyrocketed in the
last two years, nearly doubling from
2011 to 2012 from six to 11. This week
marked the first death of 2013 when a
senior citizen was struck in a crosswalk
in Markham.

Drivers are more frustrated than
ever, as they stew in congestion and
construction and push the pedal to the
metal at the first glimpse of clear road.

Too many idiots are driving dis-
tracted, with the more than 11,000
tickets issued by York cops since 2010
to drivers using hand-held devices
likely a drop in the bucket compared
to the actual number of miscreants
out there.

But it's also fair to say pedestrians
are more careless and foolish than
ever.

Of 1,128 collisions from 2010 to 2012
involving pedestrians, charges were
laid against drivers in about a third of
incidents, according to York police. Of



Debora Kelly

the 27 pedestrian fatalities, drivers were
charged in a quarter of the accidents.

Efforts to buck the disturbing trend
haven't had an impact, judging by the
increase in fatalities alone last year.

The region has lowered speed limits in
urban areas, improved safety at intersec-
tions and crosswalks and regularly holds
public education campaigns, along with
police.

The Insurance Institute for Highway
Safety tells us, as we urbanize and more
pedestrians take to the streets, there will
simply be more accidents.

Our aging population is a factor, too,
as national statistics indicate a larger pro-

portion of pedestrian fatalities involve
seniors.

A report by Ontario's Chief Coroner
last September reviewing 95 pedestri-
an deaths in the GTA also concluded
pedestrian distraction, such as using
headphones/music players and cell-
phones and "mid-block" crossings
caused more accidents than driver
inattention.

The report's 26 recommendations
included designing roads and commu-
nities to accommodate all users and
providing more pedestrian crossings —
much needed in streetscapes such as
York's that favour vehicles.

I think it's most important to continue
to make pedestrians aware of the fact
they don't rule the road.

I took to heart many years ago the
advice of Elmer the Safety Elephant: Stop,
look both ways and listen, even when
you have the right of way.

I still won't cross a road without mak-
ing eye contact with the driver and ensur-
ing the vehicle is stopped.

I had a chance to remind my 20-year-
old son of those cautions recently. We
were driving along the busy mall park-
ing lot's main thoroughfare during the
holidays and I expressed my disgust at

the number of pedestrians — many with
children — who stepped in front of cars
(not at crosswalks) without even a glance
at traffic.

"Mum," my son chided, "pedestrians
always have the right of way."

When did the rules change, I asked,
alarmed, as he spends more time as a
pedestrian than as a driver.

He was sure he had studied that for
his driver's test.

So, I had our reporter ask an expert:
York Staff Sgt. Brad Bulmer confirms the
underlying belief with pedestrians that
they have the right of way at all times is
wrong. They have the right of way only at
traffic-controlled intersections.

As drivers, we must be aware of and
respect pedestrians, extending the cour-
tesy of right of way even if they don't
have it.

As pedestrians, we must be aware of
and respect drivers — and I say never
take for granted right of way, even if we
have it.

In a battle with thousands of kilo-
grams of hurtling metal, pedestrians
always lose.

*Debora Kelly is editor in chief of the York Region
Media Group.*