

Bill Rea ? Lots of stupid drivers

It is a fact that most of us who live or work in Caledon have to do a lot of driving to get around, and that is certainly the case with me.

It's not like the days when I was a teen, when my parents were around to transport me. As well, having been raised in Toronto, there was a reasonably efficient public transit system of which I made plenty of use. I say that despite the constant complaints we hear about the TTC these days. It worked just fine in my day, but that was some 40 years ago.

So it is true that most of us need our own wheels to get around Caledon.

And those of us who do a lot of driving of course have witnessed plenty of cases of stupidity on the part of other drivers. Again, that is certainly the case with me.

Indeed, just last Thursday, as I was driving south on Dixie Road in Brampton, on my way to the meeting of Peel Regional council, and I saw two vehicles drive past a stopped school bus with its lights flashing. Granted, the road is four lanes along that stretch, but there's no median, meaning those drivers had no legal options. They were obliged to stop, and should have, but they didn't.

And that's not the first time I've seen that happen, and at roughly the same location, as well as at other places.

It's dumb to pass a school bus that way. I know because Caledon OPP Inspector Tim Melanson told us in a submission that appeared in last week's Citizen.

?Drivers can be charged if they pass a stopped school bus with its upper red lights flashing,? he wrote. ?The first offence carries a fine ranging from \$400 to \$2,000 and six demerit points. The second offence has a fine ranging from \$1,000 to \$4,000, six demerit points and possible jail time (up to six months).?

Can you afford that? I can't.

But that's not the only act of stupidity I've seen. There have been other similar incidents that I have had the privilege of witnessing. Actually, winter, such as the one I'm told we're just about done with, is not the worst time of year, although there are exceptions. For the most part, I find most people use their good sense and take it easy. Then again, there are some people who don't.

Early last Wednesday morning, I was driving up Innis Lake Road, heading to Mayor Allan Thompson's first Business Breakfast.

This was shortly before 7 a.m., and traffic on the road was unusually heavy. I figured most of the cars were heading to the same destination as I. I was willing to bet I was not in the company of a bunch of hardened felons heading to the OPP station to turn themselves in. I will also remind you the main news story that morning dealt with the weather, and freezing-rain warnings that had been issued for most of the GTA. That meant driving conditions were a bit iffy. I was taking it easy, and so were most of the people sharing the road with me. And since I was in good time, there was no reason for me to take risks.

But there was one guy pulling up on my tail, obviously looking for an opportunity to pass me.

I guessed he was in a bigger hurry than me, so in an effort to be obliging, I slowed down as soon as I saw an appropriate gap in the oncoming traffic, and pulled as far to the right as I could. The guy took advantage, zipped by me and made a gesture with his hand in my direction. It could have been a wave of appreciation, or something else. I'm a nice guy and I assumed the best.

He soon caught up with a line of about four cars up ahead, and I figured there was no way he was going to get by that group, or even be dumb enough to try.

I was, therefore, very surprised when I saw him do just that, heading up an incline coming to the crest. He would have had very little time to react had there been oncoming traffic ready to meet him at the top of that rise.

?You (bloody) idiot!? I said out loud, leaving to your imagination the word I used instead of ?bloody.?

He was able to gain one position in the line of traffic through that act of stupidity, but I had spent those couple of seconds holding my breath in fear of what might have been.

As things turned out, the group of four I had been following all pulled into the Royal Ambassador, where breakfast was being served. He who was in such a hurry, carried on his merry way north. And good luck to him.

Now I realize I'm sounding a little holier than thou, and that's not my intention.

Like just about everyone who drives a lot (make that everyone), I have pulled my fair share of boners over the years. I have a couple of speeding tickets on my record, record, and received plenty of fingers (you know what I mean) flipped in my direction.

And there have been incidents called boners that I didn't commit.

A couple of years ago, I was driving along on a foggy, wintery night, looking for a driveway I was to turn in to. I was having trouble finding the driveway because the visibility was so poor. Road conditions weren't that impressive either, so I had two good reasons for taking it easy. There was a line of traffic behind me, but I knew I was going to be turning soon, so I had my signals going.

It turned out one of the vehicles following me was a police car, and guess who the cop pulled over.

?What's the problem?? I asked the officer.

?Your driving,? was the reply I received.

He proceeded to chastise me for holding up traffic. I was starting to get a bit angry at this point, ready to point out that I was the one who was being singled out for police attention for showing appropriate caution in adverse road and visibility conditions. Somewhat against my better judgment, I held my tongue. I'm generally not a confrontational person, and I could think of more productive ways to waste my time than by getting into a shouting match with a cop. Besides, for all he knew, he might have been pulling over an impaired driver, and all of us should have a hard time arguing with that.

It still gets under my skin a bit, but there have been worse things that have happened to me.

I guess in the final analysis there will always be drivers who do silly things. Some of the things might be amusing, and worth laughing about, assuming you can afford to pay the tab. But others can be dangerous, like passing in places one shouldn't, or zipping by school buses.

The problem is we'll never completely get rid of people like that

