

From Queen's Park by Sylvia Jones MPP ? Road safety rules have been updated as of Sept. 1

With last-minute summer activities to enjoy before summer comes to an end, I thought it was important to talk about the recent changes to Ontario's road safety rules.

Earlier this year, Bill 31 ? the Making Ontario's Roads Safer Act was passed into law. As part of Bill 31, updated rules regarding road safety came into effect as of Sept. 1. These updates include increasing penalties for distracted driving and new rules to ensure the safety of cyclists.

As we all know, distracted driving is a serious safety hazard on our roads and drivers' continuance of using electronic devices while driving, in spite of regulations and public service announcements, is an ongoing problem. The Ontario Provincial Police noted that distracted driving is a factor in nearly half of traffic collisions across Ontario, and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has cited distracted driving as a contributing factor in 80 per cent of collisions and 65 per cent of near-crashes. We need to ensure our roads stay safe, and that starts with ensuring drivers understand the consequences of distracted driving. That is why penalties for distracted driving have increased. For example, distracted drivers now face a \$490 set fine and a loss of three demerit points, if convicted. Drivers' who hold a G1, G2, M1 M2-L or M2-M licence will receive a 30-day suspension for a first offence and longer for subsequent convictions.

Many communities throughout Dufferin-Caledon share the road with cycling enthusiasts. We are privileged to have many biking trails and pathways that are enjoyed by residents and visitors. Many cyclists use the roadway as a means of getting to the trails, but there are some roads in our community that are very popular routes for seasoned cyclists. Sharing the road safely with cyclists, whether you are driving in a residential area or on a rural road, is important and changes, as of Sept. 1, include an increase in the fine for ?dooring? of a cyclist. If convicted, you will now face a \$365 set fine and three demerit points. In addition, drivers will be required (when able to do so) to leave a one-meter distance when passing a cyclist. Failure to do so may result in a \$110 fine and two demerit points. Not only do we need to ensure drivers are on the lookout for cyclists, but cyclists themselves need to take responsibility for their own safety by having the proper bicycle lights and reflectors. Failure to have these items on a bicycle will result in a set fine of \$110.

In addition to tougher penalties for distracted driving and the safety of cyclists, the slow-down move-over requirement of drivers for emergency vehicles now includes tow trucks and failing to slow down and move over for a tow truck can result in a fine of \$490.

Our roads are here for everyone to enjoy, whether it is a scenic drive on the Forks of the Credit Road, a trip to the cottage, or a bike ride through Hockley Valley, we all need to be aware of our surroundings and the changes that will impact both drivers and cyclists.

Please take the time to review all of the changes in Bill 31 by visiting my website www.sylviajonesmpp.ca

