

Jones favours proposed driving sanctions from government

By Bill Rea

The Province has announced plans to crack down on careless and distracted drivers, although details are still to be announced. "In principle, I support it," Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones commented, although she too expressed the wish to see more details. "It's only an announcement, so far."

Last Wednesday's announcement promised tough new rules and penalties that would help improve road safety and keep the most vulnerable road users, including pedestrians and cyclists, safe.

The government plans to introduce new legislation this fall that, if passed, would help reduce the number of people killed or injured by impaired, distracted and dangerous drivers.

The proposed measures include a new offence for careless driving causing death or bodily harm with penalties of fines, licence suspension and imprisonment; tougher penalties for distracted driving, including higher fines, more demerit points and licence suspensions; and heavier penalties for drivers who fail to yield for pedestrians and escalating fines for drivers who are convicted of multiple pedestrian-related offences within five years. As well, the government is looking into the use of cameras on school buses that can capture motorists illegally passing them in a way that can be admitted in court.

Jones was enthused with the school bus provisions.

"People blow by school buses," she declared. "That would be a pretty quick fix to discourage that type of behaviour."

She also lamented that anyone who drives still sees people looking at their devices when they shouldn't.

"I'm happy that they're trying to deal with that," she said, adding police have reported that kind of behaviour is more dangerous than drinking and driving.

The government reported that on average, a person is killed on Ontario roads every 17 hours, and about a quarter of those fatalities are either pedestrians or cyclists.

"Ontario is taking action to reduce the number of people killed by impaired, distracted and dangerous drivers," Transportation Minister Steven Del Cuca said. "These measures will help keep some of our most vulnerable road users safe and help us drive home the message that dangerous, impaired and distracted driving is unacceptable, and will not be tolerated."

Jones stated she does not text or talk on her phone while driving. She said there was an occasions some years ago when she had had a long phone conversation on the road, then realized how far she had travelled, not recalling many of the turns she would have made. "It scares you," she said.