

**SIMCOE-YORK
PRINTING &
PUBLISHING
LIMITED**

Publisher of the

Innisfil Scope
The Times
King Township Sentinel
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Beeton, Ontario
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Subscription rates:

Within 65 km except
towns with letter carriers -
\$28.00 + G.S.T.

Beyond 65 km and towns
with letter carriers -
\$41.00 + G.S.T.

Single copies 71¢ + G.S.T.
or 75¢ (includes G.S.T.)

Published every
Wednesday

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We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada, through the Publications Assistance Program (PAP) toward our mailing costs.

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The case for a Cookstown crossing guard

While setting precedent is always a slippery slope, its hard to see the negative in placing a crossing guard at Cookstown's main intersection.

Innisfil council recently turned down a request for a crossing guard at the Highway 89 and County Road 27 intersection in Cookstown. The request was made by local resident Theresa Chambers, who was worried about the increased volume of traffic along the roadway, specifically around the time of Cookstown Central Public School's daily dismissal time.

If the proposal was approved, a crossing guard would have been placed at the intersection each weekday afternoon. Honda Canada, whose Alliston plant is partly the reason for the high traffic count, agreed to pay for the crossing guard, meaning there would be no cost to town taxpayers.

Current statistics suggest that about 17,000 vehicles use the intersection each day. Many of the several hundred children that attend the school pass through the intersection while walking home. So there are reasons to be concerned about the safety of the children in the area.

Recently, a similar request for a crosswalk



Comment

by Chris Simon

was made by St. Francis of Assisi's principal. It was also turned down, mostly due to cost and and potential liability concerns.

The town says the installation of a crosswalk would cost about \$10,000 per year, and much of that would be used for staffing. According to the provincial government, a crosswalk program would need to be administered through the South Simcoe Police, who would then be responsible for ensuring a guard was on duty at the necessary times.

If that guard doesn't show up, and a collision occurs, the police force and town could be held liable. According to Gord Wauchope, the town's deputy mayor and a former police officer, crossing guards can be unreliable at times, and could be regularly truant from duty. If that's the case, Wauchope argues, officers will be forced to take over crossing guard duties for the day,

taking them away from more pressing matters.

Council also worries that placing a crossing guard at one intersection could spark similar requests from schools across the town. In many ways, the town is in a difficult position.

But if councillors are serious about protecting town students, they'll reexamine the issue. In this case, a wealthy corporate donor has offered to pay for the crossing guard. And surely the Cookstown school council could work out a schedule with interested parents, to ensure a crossing guard schedule is followed.

Even if an officer was needed a few times per month, is it really that much to spare an hour of their time? It should be the responsibility of police to protect their citizens, regardless of the duty they are given.

If the town and the police force are concerned about practicing preventative measures for reducing crime and increasing public safety, staff should be excited by the chance to get involved in this initiative. And of course, an increased public presence always makes the police force look good.

Preventing an accident makes a lot more sense than responding to it.

Big Bay Point Road badly needs repair

Letters From Our Readers

It was good to see Dan Davidson speaking for all of us that live at Big Bay Point, in reference to the unsafe condition of our main local road.

The need to have this road repaired is an understatement and clearly a safety issue. As a resident of Big Bay Point, it is the only route to and from my home. What choice do we have but

to use it and to continue to pay increased costs of maintaining our vehicles as a result of driving on such a rough road?

As an avid walker, I have seen my share of near misses with vehicles looking like they are playing chicken with oncoming motorists, because they are dodging dips and pot holes in the road. They drive too close to the shoulder, again trying to avoid the rough spots, which makes my daily walks more and more unsafe. To quote mayor Brian Jackson, "This

is really a safety reason". Let's not wait until there is a fatality to consider the road a priority.

There is another safety issue that needs to be addressed while they are planning improvements along this stretch of the road, specifically right in the Village of Big Bay Point. Earlier this year, a three-way stop was created at the intersection of the 30th Sideroad and Big Bay Point. I don't understand why this was created, I guess I missed the logic behind it.

It's not like we are a big metropolis out here. This is another spot where there is going to be a tragic accident.

The kids are now out of school and twice this past week, as I was walking, I witnessed near misses with kids on their bikes turning from Big Bay Point onto the 30th, obviously assuming the car coming west on the road was going to stop at the sign. In both cases, the car went right through the stop sign.

The cars both leaned on their horns at the kids,

however they should have stopped at the sign, and not driven right though. I have learned never to take stop signs for granted on Big Bay Point, because the majority of the time people don't stop.

The police need to spend a few hours watching this intersection, to see how bad it is, and issue tickets to drivers that are not stopping. Either that, or the town should remove the signs on the road, before something terrible happens.

Pam McCloskey,
Innisfil

Ride to Conquer Cancer was a complete success

Letters From Our Readers

As a participant in the Ride to Conquer Cancer last month, I felt obliged to personally thank the community of Innisfil.

Princess Margaret Hospital held its first ever Ride last weekend. It was a 200 kilometre bicycle trek from Toronto to Niagara Falls. On day one, participants rode from Toronto to Hamilton, then completed the ride from

Hamilton to Niagara Falls the following day. There were over 2,500 riders who each raised at least \$2,500 in order to be allowed to participate. In all, over \$14 million was collected. The president and CEO of PMH has been quoted as saying "With this amount of fund-raising going on, I am confident that we can find a cure for cancer in my lifetime."

It was a grueling day, but most of us managed to complete the ride by mid-afternoon each day. Everyone had a story to tell. Some were riding for

deceased family or friends, some were cancer survivors, some just really enjoyed cycling and wanted to help out. At 7 p.m. on Saturday night, we were all gathered under the big top. A large tent set up for sitting down, eating, resting and talking about the day. Speeches were being made, music was played, and then the last rider of the day arrived. It was a moment that I will never forget. We had just ridden from Toronto to Hamilton, a distance of 105 km.

The day ended with a climb up Hamilton

Mountain. With over 2,500 riders and support crew cheering her on, the one legged cyclist made her way to the podium. She cried, we cried. The message was clear. Don't stop. Don't give in. We must find a cure. Whether you are part of the staff doing research, a fund raising cyclist, a cancer patient fighting for your survival, or someone contributing his/her hard earned dollar to a fundraiser, we must continue our efforts.

I know that Innisfil had many riders who entered the

event, including four of our local firefighters. Well done guys. On a personal note, I could not have done this ride without the backing of my community, friends and family. I would especially like to thank Alcona Sobey's and Alcona M&Ms for their generous donations of food which was enjoyed at a very successful fundraising dance at the ABC hall in Alcona. Thanks P. Gowan and his band Way Cool Junior for a excellent job of music for the dance.

Ron Bennett,
Alcona

Unsure about the value of Innisfil's annual Summerfest

Letters From Our Readers

I'm sure the Summerfest celebration held at Innisfil Beach Park each June is a great community event, mostly for people who do

not live near the park.

The fishing derby, talent contests, amusement rides and such are great events for families, whether they participate or merely observe the events.

What I must question is the value of the beer tent. I am not a tea-totaller, but I

really cannot see the merit of a beer tent when the town has to hire 16 extra police officers and 13 auxiliary officers to oversee patrons both in and out of the tent. Moreover, the young people hanging about outside the park also cause problems with public drunkenness, not

to mention property damage.

On the Friday evening of Summerfest, several groups of young people walked — as best they could — down our street shouting, using profane language and damaging all the mailboxes they possibly could.

I would be interested to

know how much money is generated for the new recreation complex through this event, and if all the extra policing is really worth it. The police need to be on foot patrol on the streets surrounding the park.

Ruth Keffer,
Alcona