

Motorists reminded of dangers of impaired, distracted driving as R.I.D.E. continues



By Brock Weir

Motorists coming through Aurora were reminded of the dangers of impaired driving last week as Ontario Transportation Minister Steven del Duca and York Regional Police Chief Eric Jolliffe took over a spot check on Wellington Street at Highway 404.

Getting some tips from the Minister and Chief, as well as an ice scraper to boot, it was a way to boost awareness as, according to Chief Jolliffe, some people just aren't getting the message.

He attributes the rise in charges to a number of factors, the first being the "community stepping up and helping us do our job" to keep the community safe, as well as strategic enforcement.

"The bigger message here is during this particular season, we want individuals to have fun, but please don't drink and drive," he said. "Take those other opportunities; have a friend give you a drive home, have a designated driver, stay overnight, but just make other arrangements."

While the number of impaired driving offenses is on the rise, conversely the number of fatal collisions for impaired driving is down. 15 per cent of fatal collisions have been alcohol related this year, he added.

The Minister's participation in the spot check not allowed him to boost awareness of impaired driving, but also see the York Regional Police in action.

"Drinking and driving, unfortunately, can happen at any time of day and folks here at the York Regional Police are doing an extraordinary job," said Mr. del Duca. "I am really thrilled to be out here this afternoon and have a chance to see them do their great work and have a chance to interact with some of the drivers to make sure they are getting the message."

"I think the most important thing is to recognize that the work is never done. We have made tremendous progress in terms of raising awareness over the last generation in terms of drivers. We still see challenges around distracted driving, we see challenges still around drug impaired driving, and the work goes on."

Ahead to 2015, he added he was particularly eager to see Bill 31, which is currently working through the Ontario Legislature to bring new and distinct penalties for drug impaired driving and distracted driving, into reality.

"We have seen some studies come out over the last year that suggest with our youngest drivers perhaps the distracted driving piece, the texting and driving, is a concern."