

## Toys for Tickets program turns parking blunders into chance to give back



**By Brock Weir**

If you've had the misfortune of getting a parking ticket after November 15, this is one cloud with a silver lining.

The Town of Aurora is in the midst of its annual Toys for Tickets program. Through this program, which runs through December 14, you can pay your municipal parking ticket at Town Hall with a toy, gift card or food donation of equal or greater value to the penalty on your parking ticket.

All toys, food donations and gift cards will be collected for the York Regional Police's Holiday Heroes campaign and directly benefit families in need in both Aurora and Newmarket.

"This is our third year doing Toys for Tickets," says Bylaw Manager Alexander Wray. "Any ticket issued in the Town from November 15 to December 14, regardless of the time of day or offence, can be exchanged here at Town Hall for a toy of equal or greater value to the ticket, a gift card, or a food donation. All of that that comes in to us will be then taken over to York Regional Police and will be distributed in the communities of Aurora and Newmarket over the holidays season for families who need it. It is our way of giving back over the holiday season. It is our opportunity to engage with the community and help those who need it the most."

To participate, all you need to do is bring in your gift cards, food donations, or your toy in its original packaging. Original receipts or no photo copies or emails must be provided indicating the value of your donation, along with the parking ticket in question.

Multiple toys may be donated totalling up to the full value of your ticket.

Donations will only be accepted for tickets issued within the period of November 15 to December 14, and must be in before that deadline.

This year will be the first in which the Toys for Tickets program pertains to all parking violation tickets issued by the municipality.

"I am really trying to engage the bylaw department and Town Services in our community," says Wray. "I think oftentimes our work is maybe looked at in a negative aspect because we issue a lot of tickets, they don't always want bylaw there, but this is a great opportunity for us to work with the community and say, "Look, it is not about the Town, it's not about what we're trying to take in, it is about giving back to the community."

"What I have done this year that we haven't done in the past is we have opened it up to tickets like fire routes and accessible parking tickets. In the past, those tickets were excluded from the program and I think it is just an opportunity to treat all tickets fairly, treat all residents who receive a ticket equally, and give them the same opportunity that someone would have just for parking on the road. Any ticket issued in the Town in relation to parking offences is eligible for the program.

"We would encourage donations even if you don't receive a ticket. It is going to support our community, those in need, and it is a great way to give back."