

## EDITORIAL: BRB. Cops

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If you're reading this editorial on your smartphone or tablet while driving, we recommend that you put it down and save it for later.

Not just because it's an incredibly foolish and selfish thing to do, putting yourself and innocent others at risk, but because the fines for distracted driving are about to go up.

Currently, anyone caught texting behind the wheel will face a \$167 fine and be struck with demerit points. Other provinces have far more punitive fines. Nova Scotia's, by comparison, is \$579.

Ontario's start at \$490 but automatically jump to \$1,000 if you fight the ticket in court and lose.

We support upping the fines as a means to curbing the behaviour that should be left at the curb.

Distracted driving leads to more crashes than drunk driving and it claims more lives than homicides, according to the province.

But we worry about the impacts this could have on someone who isn't well off. In a part of the world where the cost of living has run laps around growth in incomes, a fine of \$1,000 or more could sink someone who's vulnerable. It's especially unfair if they have kids.

The fine should be big enough to deter the behaviour but not so big as to be ruinous. And there are other ways.

Finland, for example, issues traffic fines in proportion to an offender's income. It achieves the same effect without putting someone out on the street. It's an idea worth considering.

After all, doesn't it always seem to be the guy in the Bimmer or the woman in the luxury SUV making you cringe as you see them yammering away on their phones at an intersection?

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