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Durham Regional Police Headquarters – Council Chambers
605 Rossland Rd. E., Whitby, Ontario L1N 0B8
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**DEPUTATION: RE EMERGENCY VEHICLES GOING WRONG WAY ON A HIGHWAY FATALLY
KILLING THE INICENT**

Firstly, I want to thank you, Mr. Chair, members of the Police Service Board, and the police chief, for this opportunity to address you. I am an 86-year-old retired nurse and former Occupational Health and Safety Officer with the Ministry of Labour.

My deputation concerns the fatal multiple-vehicle collision that took the lives of four people, including a child, on Highway 401 as a result of both a suspect vehicle and police vehicles traveling the wrong way on the 401 during a police pursuit. In my respectful opinion, this was preventable.

Several years ago, I had an alarming experience while traveling to downtown Toronto for a theatre night. All vehicles were traveling at the speed limit. As we entered the ramp at Westney Road to merge onto Highway 401 West, we encountered an ambulance driving down the ramp in the wrong direction. Both vehicles stopped just in time, with only a paper-thin distance between our bumpers.

The following week, I visited the Ambulance Headquarters on Anderson Street in Whitby to discuss this issue. I was referred to the central Ambulance Headquarters in downtown Toronto, where I had what I believed to be a productive meeting concerning policy and procedure review. However, it appears no changes were made. And here we are dealing with a serious death that could have been avoided.

I firmly believe that no one should have the right to drive the wrong way on a highway unless the highway is officially closed. The safety of all individuals on the road is paramount.

1. The current policy allowing emergency vehicles to travel the wrong way on highways should be rescinded. Alternative strategies must be explored and implemented.
2. Road signs alone are insufficient due to their overabundance. I propose the introduction of technology embedded in the pavement, such as sensors or other mechanisms, to prevent wrong-way driving. While this technology may not exist today, it is worth pursuing future innovations.

During my tenure with the Ministry of Labour, I issued an order to improve air quality in the operating rooms at Centenary Hospital. Despite the absence of existing technology, I stood by my order. Approximately one year later, the “scavenger system” was invented, marking a primitive yet essential start to addressing the issue.

- I recommend that police services collaborate with the Ministry of Transportation to develop a simple yet effective mechanism to prevent wrong-way entry on high-speed and high-traffic ramps. For instance, steel spikes similar to those used at airport car rental exits could be considered.
- It is worth exploring advanced systems like Norway's elaborate traffic lighting system (Pulse Concept), which is designed to keep drivers alert.
- The collision I described was horrific but preventable. We must learn from such incidents and adopt better technologies and policies. Similar to stringent laws against the unlawful possession of firearms, intentional wrong-way driving with criminal intent should carry severe consequences.
- While it is easy to criticize officers after the fact, it is crucial to focus on proactive solutions and continuous improvement.

I strongly recommend that the Durham Regional Police Service take the initiative to bring other police services and the Ministry of Transportation together to engage in the process of finding the right solution.

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