



Rana Florida, Contributor

CEO, The Creative Class Group & Best-Selling Author, Upgrade

# City Leaders Cower to Pressure to Remove a Stop Sign - Residents in a Fury

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In July 2017, in response to a formal request from the [North Rosedale Residents' Association](#), the city of Toronto placed two new stop signs at the intersections of Glen Road and Roxborough Drive and Glen Road and Binscarth Road. A month after the signs were installed, the residents' association requested that they be taken down. "It's a little bit unusual," Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam [remarked](#), with decided understatement, "For a residents' association to lobby so hard for stop signs and then to ask us to take them out."

John Duras, a former board member and head of the neighborhood association's transportation committee said, "Councillor Wong-Tam is acting irresponsibly. The safety of the residents is at stake."

"If I had my choice," Wong-Tam admitted, "I would have left [the signs] in." Of the likelihood of them coming back she said, "I can't say it's impossible, and it's almost becoming ridiculous. We'd need to have a very compelling reason to put [them] back again."

According to Duras, the pressure came from threats from two vocal residents who live on the corner of Glen and Binscarth Road—complaining "The noise and pollution are disruptive while the stop signs do not achieve the intended goal to curb speeders on Glen Rd." In an email to the NRRRA board, a past NRRRA President said, "the signs are clearly working for their intended purpose, i.e., public safety and cars (and TTC buses) travelling through the neighbourhood at a reduced speed."

Despite ample evidence that the signs had accomplished their goal of reducing the average speed of traffic on Glen Road from an unsafe and illegal 48 kilometres per hour to a much safer (and legal) 34, Councillor Wong-Tam passed the motion to take out the stop signs. In an email to the Mayor Councillor Wong-Tam, another past NRRRA President said, "Any attempt to remove these stop signs to appease a handful of residents - whose objections are frankly petty and selfish - would be seriously misguided."

When polled this summer by the NRRRA Transportation Committee, 68 residents said they supported the signs and only four opposed them. Sadly, Glen Road is the longest

uninterrupted stretch of road in the neighborhood. Its speeding traffic passes by parks, schools, churches, and tennis courts. In slowing down the traffic, the stop signs saved lives. Duras says, "all of whom were in support of the stop signs were not consulted about their removal." Doug Norris, the head minister at Rosedale United Church backs him up. "We were consulted to install them," he says. "I don't recall being consulted on commissioning their removal. There is no doubt that without the signs Glen Road traffic is far too fast very often, and I hope we will not have to witness something tragic as a result." So does Dave Solc, Head Coach at the Rosedale Tennis Courts. "This is a no brainer," he says. "We all know that the right thing to do is to keep the stop signs." He adds that by removing them two months later, the situation becomes even more dangerous. Mark Cohon, Chair of the Toronto Global Board of Directors is adamantly opposed to the removal of the stop signs. He says his 11-year-old daughter, who walks to a nearby school, wants to hold a student protest urging community leaders to "Please Don't Make a Mistake: Kids Lives vs Squeaky Brakes. Keep our stop sign." He adds, "I hope common sense prevails because this makes absolutely no sense."

Lewis Reford, President of the NRRRA, says that he thought putting in the stop signs was the right thing to do, until "we heard from a large number of residents opposing them," adding that the NRRRA is now working on how best to deal with excessive traffic speeds on Glen Road. "We are confident additional traffic calming measures can be implemented on Glen Road that also meet with broad public support and will have a new plan in place by the end of 2017." When asked about the threats to the Association and Duras, Reford said he can't confirm them.

"Shame on all of them," said Duras. "Reford should step down as President."

The repercussions of this incident ripple far beyond this one very nice neighborhood.

Every four hours, a pedestrian is hit by a car in Toronto and a cyclist is hit once every 7 hours or so. Last year was the deadliest for Toronto pedestrians in a decade, with 43 killed, or one every eight and a half days. Between 2008 and 2012, more than 10,000 pedestrians and 5,000 bicyclists were injured or killed as a result of collisions with motor vehicles with children and the elderly being most at risk. In 2016, Toronto's rate of pedestrian fatality was 1.6 per 100,000 – worse than Chicago, Seattle, San Francisco, Boston, Washington DC, Portland, Pittsburgh, Cleveland and Buffalo.

Torontonians were rightly appalled when Rob Ford tore out the bike lanes on Jarvis Street. But if there ever was a "war on the car," the car has been running roughshod over its opposition.

As my husband, the urbanist Richard Florida has remarked, "what will Amazon think when it looks at those statistics, and at neighborhoods like North Rosedale? They will scour those neighborhoods for housing and immediately see their lack of bike lanes, the speedways, and poor pedestrian safety, and they will factor it into their decision about which city to expand into."

Toronto is incredibly dangerous and car-oriented. Its leaders need to get a clue.