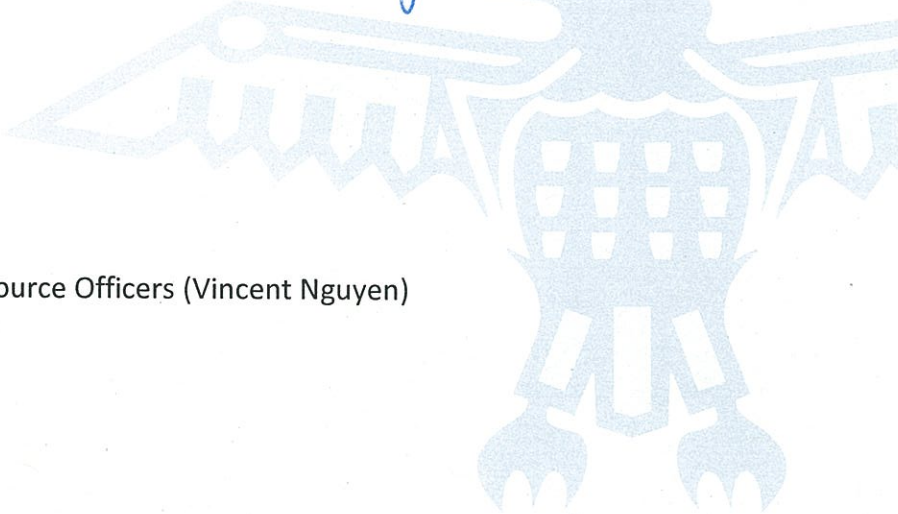


ROSS SHEPPARD HIGH SCHOOL

13546 - 111 Ave NW Edmonton, AB T5M 2P2

Duplicate



Attn: Alberta Association of School Resource Officers (Vincent Nguyen)

Dear Madam/Sir:

My name is Peter Kuebel and I am a teacher at Ross Sheppard High School in Edmonton. The purpose of this letter is to provide my recommendation for a scholarship for Vincent Nguyen. I was Vincent's social studies teacher this year, and have known him for two years. The first thing that comes to mind when I think of Vincent is what a "well rounded" student he is. He is very bright and has been an honors student, in every subject, every year, since grade 1. He is funny, friendly, gets along with everyone and is athletic. His extra-curricular involvement includes playing hockey for the Knights of Columbus; he has volunteered for the Scarecrow festival and works as a referee in minor hockey.

Vincent can always be counted on. He never misses classes, is always on time and always completes his homework. Vincent has been a pleasure to teach and I believe that he is very deserving of a scholarship. I trust that the above information is satisfactory however please feel free to contact me at either the above phone or by email at peter.kuebel@epsb.ca

Sincerely,

Peter Kuebel

11 APR 29 AM 8:12

It's a Wake-Up Call

By Vincent Nguyen

Technology is all around us. It resides in our homes, our workplace, and our cars. We are in a world where technological advancements are continually being made and where innovation is the driving force of our economy. A world where technology has embedded itself into our lives whether it's used to spread a plethora of networks of information across the globe, save the lives of people, or continually allows us to fuel the drive to discover new things. Technology opens the doors to unimaginable possibilities and garners extraordinary potential that we never thought possible decades ago. Even magazines have dubbed a "new age" of technology where electronics are being utilized in our everyday lives and activities, whether it be the alarm clock that wakes you up every morning, the computer you used to write an essay, or the text you sent to keep in touch with family and friends across the country. Younger generations have been born into this "new age" of technology and have quickly adapted to it evident by how terms such as googling, instant messaging, tweeting, and facebooking have all become part of their daily conventional vocabulary and routines. Technology is a huge part of our lives and even worldwide consumer products ranging from lime green MP3 players to sleek black cell phones have all been tailored to appeal the eyes of the younger and newer generations. It is apparent that technology is everywhere you go.

But with the constant innovation and advancements in technology, there can always be too much of a good thing, and with that, there comes a negative drawback. One of these drawbacks in which technology has impeded upon is in driving. In the past, driving was much easier and focusable because there were no distractions or forms of technology that could have hindered an individual's ability to drive safely and get from point A to point B. In the modern age, technology has completely enveloped our lives and consistently pushes the boundaries and cause debate as to what should be allowed and

what shouldn't be on the road. Driving is much more difficult today due to the number of technological advances on devices such as television, radios, MP3 players, GPS navigational systems, and cellular phones. Nicholas Barr, the author of the best-selling book, *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*, signals that our minds are being structurally changed as a result of technology. He claims that "we are becoming ever more adept at scanning and skimming, but what we are losing is our capacity for concentration, contemplation and reflection."

This is very true in regards to devices such as cell phones and MP3 players which have all been shown to reduce concentration and focus while driving. According to the studies from the *Human Factors Journals*, it was calculated that drivers talking on cell phones were a staggering eighteen percent slower to react to brake lights and that chatting motorists were even more inept than drunken drivers with blood alcohol levels exceeding 0.08. Drivers were also more likely to rear end the vehicle in front of them. This is exceptionally dangerous as more and more teens are beginning to drive because as these teens witness others on cell phones while driving, they will begin to think that talking on cell phones while operating a vehicle will become the norm and become acceptable in society. As a result, we must stop the deadly trend of cellular use while driving or risk setting the standard that it is acceptable to drive while on the phone. People may argue that using a hands-free device will significantly reduce the amount of car accidents, but David Strayer, a psychology professor at the University of Utah, doesn't seem to think so. Strayer revealed that it doesn't matter whether both hands are on the steering wheel; it's whether the driver's mind is on the road or on the phone. He also stated that "If you put a 20-year-old driver behind the wheel with a cell phone, their reaction times are the same as a 70-year-old driver who is not using a cell phone," and that "It's like instantly aging a large number of drivers."

Drivers may be looking at what's in front of them, but the conversation at hand is restricting that information from getting processed in the brain. Additionally, a study by the American Psychological Association found that talking on a cell phone or hands-free device cut areas of the brain used for driving by a mind boggling fifty percent. Also, it was found that drivers focusing on a phone conversation restricted them from recalling objects on the road as well as having difficulty in noticing surrounding traffic. This poses a serious threat to the safety of pedestrians and other drivers. It can then be seen that driving while talking on a cell phone or hands-free device significantly impedes a driver's ability to focus and concentrate on the road. As a result, consequences of driving while on a cell phone can be fatal and there has to be a fine line between the ignorance of using a cell phone while driving, and the safety of others.

Although technology makes our lives easier, it can also do quite the opposite. Commanding two tonne monstrous vehicles requires our full attention to control, yet half our attention is dwindled upon talking or texting over the cell phone? The cost of driving distracted with a cell phone or hands-free device can result in significant damage to property and can ultimately lead to fatalities. It is increasingly becoming more dangerous in Canada because with currently over 7.92 million registered passenger vehicles, the number of passenger vehicles have also increased by sixty percent in the last twenty years alone. According to the Canadian Transportation Safety Board, 160,000 road accidents occur in Canada every year and of these 160,000 road accidents, nearly 3000 people are killed. Of all of these car accidents, twenty six percent of all car accidents in North America are the aftermath of talking on cell phones. That means around 750 lives could have been saved had they not been distracted by a cell phone. The costs of driving while distracted by a device also include an estimated whopping total of \$62.7 billion due to property damage, healthcare, emergency response, and legal settlements. Not to mention the amount of taxpayers' dollars and the cost of time and resources that are used up through police officers and firefighters. Although cell phones, radios, televisions, and MP3 players are very useful and helpful in our

lives, it's simple and clear. A cell phone conversation is not worth a life or the cause of emotional pain and suffering.

Distracting devices should be banned while driving to an extent where it is not hazardous to the safety of the driver or those around him or her. The government should not ban all technological devices because several of them actually benefit us while we are in danger. For example, automatic crash response systems allows for drivers to call for help instantly after being in a car accident, providing a safety net for drivers and as a result, this technological device can potentially save many lives. Instead, the government should ban devices such as cell phones and hands-free devices which are constantly proven time and time again to be hazardous to the safety of the driver and those around him or her. Although marketing gives people a sense that hands-free devices are indeed safer, it is actually giving people a false sense of security that it is safe and acceptable to drive while talking over the phone. Studies have shown that the risks of having an accident are four times more likely whether talking on a cell phone or using a hands-free device. As a result, distracting devices while driving should be banned if they possess a hazard to the safety of the driver or the safety of others.

Fixing the problem is not as easy as it seems. Firstly, the most effective and efficient way of reducing the amount of car accidents due to driving while distracted would be through legislation. The government should recognize the damage and safety concerns that driving while distracted possesses and should implement legislations and laws that will ensure that people who continue to do so will be penalized. These legislations and laws should not pertain to only municipal areas, but also to a provincial level. For example, the provincial government of Alberta has recently taken the initiative to make roads safer by introducing and implementing a "distracted driving" legislation called Bill 16. Bill 16 prohibits the usage of hand-held cell phones, laptops, reading printed materials and personal grooming while driving but allows the usage of hands-free devices. The proposed fine for this new offence is \$172.

However, many believe the Bill should have extended its ban on the usage of hands-free devices considering the fact that it is equally as dangerous as driving while using a cell phone. According to the Alberta Motor Association, almost seventy percent of Albertan respondents of a survey say that Bill 16 should include the ban on hands-free devices. Although Bill 16 could have been improved upon, it is a good start to ensuring the safety of drivers and those around them. Transportation Minister Luke Ouellette was quoted, "Our message is clear: Keep your hands on the wheel and your eyes on the road." By implementing these laws, drivers are less likely to be involved in car accidents and it ensures that their focus is entirely on the road. In addition, it is necessary that the government sponsors and endorses public awareness campaigns to get the attention of all Canadian citizens that it is unsafe to drive while distracted by a device. A safety curriculum should also be implemented in schools where the new generation of drivers are educated about the risks of driving distracted and its consequences. The word must get out to the public in order to minimize the amount of car accidents and fatalities that occur yearly. There has to be both legislations that are implemented to restrict drivers from driving distracted and as well as a need for government sponsored campaigns to spread awareness in order for the problem to be fixed.

Technology is constantly being used in our daily lives and is changing the way we live in our world. New advancements and innovations in technology are aiming towards a brighter future for mankind and society as a whole. Whether it's a defibrillator stimulating a heartbeat, spreading a network of information through the internet to educate, or perhaps even rekindling a spark in the relationship of two people from different ends of the earth, technology does it all. Technology has an unimaginable potential with its ability to benefit humans but at the same time, it can do quite the opposite. It can give life and take a life in a split second. As we fall into the steep gutters of discovering new technology, we must not forget or ignore the safety of others in the process of doing so. Technology will inevitably be prominent in our daily lives, but does that mean we have to accept the bad with the good?

By recognizing, acknowledging and taking initiative on the dangers of technology and its relationship with safety, we can truly explore the extraordinary limitless potential of all that technology has to offer.

Name: Vincent Nguyen

Grade: 12

School: Ross Sheppard High School

Address: 13519 149 Ave, T6V 1M1

City: Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Email Address: vincent_n@hotmail.com

Phone Number: 780 918 0892