



A car passes through a crosswalk at the corner of Herring Cove Road and Dentith Street in Spryfield earlier this year. Columnist Angela Mombourquette argues that pedestrians who step into crosswalks without looking for traffic are as much at fault as drivers who ignore pedestrians.

(INGRID BULMER / Staff)

# Pedestrians: Look before you walk

**N**OW THAT NIGHT falls just shortly after lunchtime, I think it's time we sat down and had a little talk, just between us — pedestrians and drivers.

We need a little intervention. A little communication facilitation. A little Hali-friendly meeting of the minds. Because sometimes we don't all seem to be on the same page.

Halifax car-pedestrian culture has always been a thing of beauty and amazement to me. If you're walking, and you even think about crossing the street, cars seem to come to a screeching halt, wherever they are, in deference to your right to cross. I love that about Halifax; I think it's one of the things that makes us culturally unique.

But I guess it's inevitable that this sort of mindset can lead pedestrians to occasionally take it for granted that everyone is ready, willing, and able to stop for them. Several times in the past few weeks, I've had people step out in front of my car without even turning their heads to see if I'm there.

Suzanne Jordan, who lives in

## DON'T GET ME STARTED



ANGELA MOMBOURQUETTE

Brookside, is frustrated with Halifax pedestrians.

"The biggest thing that concerns me is the fact that people don't look. They make this assumption that because they are pedestrians, they have the right of way. And, although they do, the reality is that cars are bigger and they will win."

A good argument, regardless of the time of day. But when we add a little darkness to the mix and then throw in some black clothing, we get a bit of a situation. Now the car-people really can't see the foot-people.

Suzanne has experienced this firsthand. "Two weeks ago, it was dark,

probably around quarter to seven and it was pouring rain. And someone was crossing the road. . . . And there's a crosswalk (at this intersection) with lights set up — city expenses well-invested. But then someone just walked across the street without pressing the button, wearing dark clothing, and not looking!"

I think there may be a few things going on here. Perhaps it's a kind of arrogance. I'll admit that there have been times when I've been walking, and I've thought, "You're in your nice warm car, I'm out here on the cold windy street, you be the careful one." Or maybe it's just conditioning. So far the "walk-without-looking" method has worked for some people, so hey — why change now?

Suzanne says it's just a matter of common sense. "I think drivers would be more patient and agreeable if pedestrians were more aware and took advantage of the tools that are provided to them, like lit crosswalks.

"Press a button. It doesn't take a lot of energy. If you're walking two kilo-

metres to work every day, that extra amount of energy it takes you to push a button at the crosswalk isn't gonna kill you."

So here's the intervention part. I really think we can work this out if we all just try to empathize a little with one another.

We all have a right to our chosen mode of transportation, yes? And nobody really wants to be responsible for hurting anyone else, true?

So we just have to acknowledge that we all deserve a chance to get from point A to point B safely, and with minimal conflict. Let's join hands and make a vow, shall we?

If we all take personal responsibility for our own safety, we won't have to rely upon the kindness (or wakefulness or focus) of strangers. And that, as Suzanne says, will "just make for better pedestrian-automobile harmony."

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