

Opinion

Stop aggressive driving

Here's a statistic that should, but, sadly, likely won't, cause drivers to slow down. So far this year the Ontario Provincial Police say deaths caused by aggressive driving are up a stunning 80 per cent, to 27 from 15, compared to this time last year.

In fact, aggressive driving — which includes speeding, tailgating, making excessive lane changes, intentionally preventing another driver from passing, and cutting off others on the road — is the No. 1 killer on Ontario highways, Sgt. Kerry Schmidt said.

It's particularly worrying that this trend is taking shape before summer has even officially begun. That's the season when, along with an increase in cars and motorcycles on the road, police generally see an uptick in dangerous speeding.

So concerned are police forces in the province about aggressive driving that several have launched a concerted effort to draw attention to its dangers.

Earlier this spring, a coalition of forces, including the Halton Regional Police Service, launched Project ERASE — Eliminate Racing Activity on Streets Everywhere — in response to a spike in so-called stunt-driving charges in early 2017.

Such risky driving is costing lives. But experts agree that it's unlikely to stop until the government does more to raise public awareness of the dangers and to increase the severity of the already steep penalties police can impose on reckless drivers.

Under the current "stunt driving law" passed in 2007, police can immediately seize a driver's licence and vehicle for one week. Upon conviction drivers face fines of \$2,000 to \$10,000, up to six months of imprisonment, and a licence suspension for up to two years for a first-time offence and 10 years for a second.

You'd think that would be enough to deter aggressive driving. But sadly, it's not. In January, Niagara Regional Police stopped a 20-year-old male Stoney Creek driver for stunt driving for the third time in 10 months.

That's why all parties in Ontario should join forces and pass a private member's bill from Tourism Minister and Burlington MPP Eleanor McMahon that would impose even stiffer fines and sentences on out-of-control drivers.

Bill 213 would increase the penalties for those who cause death or bodily harm due to careless driving by allowing for fines of up to \$50,000, a licence suspension for up to five years, and imprisonment for up to two years.

The war on aggressive driving can be won with a combination of publicity, peer pressure and penalties severe enough to encourage behavioural changes. But it won't be easy. Aggressive driving is astoundingly widespread.

The latest statistics from the OPP seem to suggest Canada faces a pervasive problem. It's time the government declared a war on aggressive driving. It can start with a public education campaign that takes effect before the summer.

SNAPSHOT



PRETTY IN PINK: *Champion* reader Alejandro Gutierrez snapped this photo of a pink trillium during a recent visit to Limehouse Conservation Area. Do you have a unique, interesting, fun or cute photo taken in Milton that you would like to submit to be considered for Snapshot? Send submissions (minimum 600 KB resolution) to editor@miltoncanadian-champion.com or use the hashtag #MiltonChampion on Instagram. Please include the name of the photographer (for publication) and a description of the photo including the location where it was taken.



MILTON TIME CAPSULES

Tires and tubes taken during rash of garage robberies

Time Capsules are gems of information extracted from past issues of the Champion and other publications in order to provide a window into Milton's past.

May 1922

Last Sunday night burglars entered McDuffe Bros. Garage adjoining the Farmers' Co-operative building, by forcing open a second storey door in the rear. No ladder was used and it is supposed that the thieves climbed to the door from a motor car. Seven or eight new tires and a number of tubes were stolen. The garage had been raided twice before. Thayer Hepburn's once with second unsuccessful attempt, and Fred Robinson's once. An attempt was made on Bert Buck's but the thieves were frightened away. Garages have been robbed so often it is suspected that the thieves are local.

...
The Milton High School Cadets were inspected this morning, with a march past. There were three officers and 46 n.c.o's and men on parade. Lieut. Peacock in command. The inspecting officer was Captain Edwards, M.C. of Toronto who served in the Imperials before the Great War and went overseas from Kingston in 1914 with the first contingent. He told the *Champion* that the Milton High School Cadets were the best he had seen anywhere. He spoke particularly of their fine physique, only two small-sized boys among them and the rest averaging man's size. Their smartness on parade was notable.

This material is assembled on behalf of the Milton Historical Society by Jim Dills, who can be reached through the society at (905) 875-4156.

MILTON
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Regional General Manager
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