

## Don't be a statistic this weekend

As we sit on the verge of the first long weekend of the year the anticipation for many is palpable.

The cottage, the beach, or just grilling in the backyard most of us can't wait.

However, sadly the Victoria Day weekend can be one of the most tragic times of year for carnage and death on our highways and lakes.

Police will be targeting high risk driving behaviours during Canada Road Safety Week that kicked off May 16.

The national campaign, which runs through Monday (May 22) is aimed at making Canada's roads the safest in the world.

It is a collaborative effort by Canadian police services to remind people that an essential part of the enforcement job is to save lives and reduce injuries on our roadways.

The focus of the campaign will be on behaviours that put drivers, passengers and other road users most at risk such as the Big 4 Killers impaired driving (by alcohol or drug), failure or improper use of seat belt, distracted driving and aggressive driving.

The road worthiness of passenger vehicles and commercial vehicles will also be a focus of the campaign.

The annual blitzes have become a local tradition and emphasize both enforcement and education, according to police.

The OPP will also be patrolling the 400 series of highways.

Safety, however, starts with each and every one of us.

We encourage you to act responsibly on the highways and waterways.

If you drink, don't operate a vehicle or a boat.

Use a designated driver or stay over at a friend's house if you've had a bit too much to drink.

Also, stay sober whether you're boating or swimming and please put the phone down while behind the wheel.

Whatever you do, please don't become another statistic.

The last thing we want to be doing on Tuesday is writing up stories about residents being injured or killed.

### The Independent & Free Press

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## Letters to the editor

### The key word is public

In response to the Independent's May 11 letter regarding Muslim prayers in public schools, I would like to point out that the key word is, public.

To answer the writer's questions, I ask, how would you feel if you were a non-Muslim, denied your own religious prayers because Muslims find them offensive and then had Muslims given the special privilege of praying their prayers?

Public school students are comprised of many different races, cultures and religious affiliations.

Their different beliefs and lifestyles are often in conflict with one another.

For that reason all, under a public system, must be treated impartially with no special privileges for any one group.

While we are guaranteed freedom of religion, I don't know how that freedom extends to infringing our freedom on the religious freedom of others.

Christian prayer was disallowed from public schools years ago because it was offensive to some students.

Since that time, public schools have been religion-free and in the spirit of fairness to all it must remain that way.

There are others besides Muslims who draw comfort and strength from their religions.

No doubt those students pray quietly, privately and in appropriate places without exposing their fellow students to what may be offensive to them.

Prayer groups are different from other school groups because of their religious nature which does not exist in sports, music, etc.

Denying prayer in public schools does not necessarily indicate stereotyping or prejudice nor does it diminish the importance of any sacred book.

It simply ensures that no special group is granted a privilege that is not granted to others.

Groups that feel religion has a necessary place in the educational system are free to establish and fund

their own schools.

As long as they use the public system they must be held to the same rules as everyone else.

If Muslim prayers are to be allowed in public schools, then so too must the prayers of every other religion. Otherwise it must remain that none are allowed.

The latter option is the most desirable in order to preserve order and tolerance among students and their families.

Eileen Hutcheson,  
 Acton

The IFP welcomes Letters to the Editor on topics of interest to readers. All letters must be signed with a first and last name or first initial and last name, and include an address and daytime phone number for verification.

The Editor reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit letters for length and libelous statements.

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