

## OUR VIEW

# 'Known to police' are three words that need to go

Words always matter - but when they're put to work talking about the victims and perpetrators of violent crime, from the mouths of police to the pens of journalists, they matter doubly so.

And they should be employed with great care. When someone is accused of murdering someone but not yet convicted, it's irresponsible of police to call them a murderer, and wrong of reporters to describe them as anything other than the accused. When police offer up a description from eyewitnesses of a suspect in a crime, it's the same thing: we speak of a suspect and not a criminal.

When we do this, we are very mindful of the rights and presumptions of the accused - we must presume innocence.

Sadly, we are not nearly so careful about the rights of victims - or the memories of those deceased.

As Metroland Media Toronto's crime specialist Andrew Palamarchuk tells us this week, both press and police regularly besmirch reputations and destroy memories, by including three simple words - "known to police" - when describing some crime victims.

What does "known to police" mean? It doesn't mean that police have carded the individual, or that they've called the police for help - so it's not entirely innocent. But it also doesn't necessarily mean that the person has been convicted of a crime. Police in Toronto use the term when a charge has been laid by police for a Criminal Code offense, of which the person may or may not be guilty.

The term does serve a kind of coded purpose: it lets the public know that a violent crime that took place perhaps not far from their home may have been a result of a dispute between criminals, or in the commission of a criminal act. It is a comfort.

The problem is, of course, that it really shouldn't provide comfort. What it does provide is innuendo, against the reputation of people who on the face of it have done nothing worse than find themselves in a bullet's path.

And those people, and their friends, have every right to take offense. This happened following a July 23 shooting at a backyard party at the Scarborough home of Elma Lewis. Three people, including her daughter, were shot. Police used the phrase to describe each of them - to no end other than provide reassurances to the neighbours in the otherwise peaceful Scarborough neighbourhood that for them, nothing had changed.

Reassurance paid for with the innuendo of "known to police" is no reassurance at all. Words matter, and we need to be more careful with those three.



## LETTERS &amp; COMMENTARY

## Santa Claus needs your help

For more than 86 years the Georgetown Lions Club has organized and staged the annual Santa Claus Parade.

For the last few years the parade has been an evening event with literally thousands of spectators enjoying the parade. Hundreds of volunteers' hours are required to run the event.

Many residents believe that the Town of Halton Hills runs the event; while they do provide assistance, the Lions Club provides most of the volunteers and the funding comes from our corporate and private sponsors. Each year, our costs continue to rise as we endeavour each year to produce a great parade,

however it is becoming more and more challenging.

We will require many volunteers to man our crowd control barriers in order to keep our costs down. We are looking for mature adult volunteers at each traffic barricade on the parade route.

At this time we are looking for 50-60 volunteers to help on parade day to keep both our spectators and parade participants safe. The amount of time required is about four hours and there is a great benefit, you will have the best view of the parade.

If you are interested in participating, please email us [georgetownlions@gmail.com](mailto:georgetownlions@gmail.com) or contact Linda Dilks at 905-702-1284 and leave us your name, number and email address. Your assistance is

greatly appreciated.

Santa Claus is Coming to Georgetown Nov. 18!

Help us Celebrate 150 Years of Christmas in Canada.

Your help will ensure he arrives this year and for many years to come.

**Louie Violo,**  
Chair, 2017 Santa Claus Parade

## Are teachers qualified?

*Re: Letter from Bob Clark, regarding elementary education.*

Mr. Clark mentions math, but there needs to be improvement in the teaching of English, particularly in the way that it is spoken.

Bad grammar seems to be the norm these days. I constantly hear: double negatives, wrong pro-

nouns, adjectives instead of adverbs, and bad sentence construction.

These are some of the faults, but there are many more.

It is bad enough when people in their normal conversations use bad grammar, but when I hear professional journalists using it also; I wonder what will happen to English in the years to come.

I expect TV and radio announcers to speak better, but they are just as bad as any other. How can we expect children to grow up speaking properly when they have such a bad example every time they watch the TV or listen to the radio.

Are our teachers qualified to teach English?

It would appear that they are not.

**Terry Brown**

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