

OPINION

Hang up the cellphone

This week the fine for distracting driving is going to hurt you a lot more in the wallet to reflect the seriousness of a crime that has caused death and heartache across the country.

As of today, the Highway Traffic Act fines for driving while texting or talking on a handheld phone will increase to \$280 from \$155.

The increase reflects society's abhorrence to a crime that is paramount to drinking and driving, yet sadly, you don't have to look far to see the consequences of what many seem as a harmless action.

A Georgetown driver who struck and killed an 89-year-old pedestrian in December 2012 was sentenced to 20 days in prison and had her driver's licence suspended for two years last week in Burlington Provincial Offences Court.

Jennifer Unsworth, 37, pleaded guilty on Feb. 7 to careless driving and driving with a handheld device.

Justice of the Peace Marsha Farnand cited a number of similar cases in coming to her decision. She also took into account Unsworth's conviction in October 2010 for using a handheld device while driving.

"She obviously did not learn her lesson," said Farnand.

According to a list compiled by the CAA, drivers engaged in text messaging on a cellular phone are 23 times more likely to be involved in a crash or near crash event compared with non-distracted drivers. (Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, 2010).

Using a handheld device while driving is like playing Russian roulette.

Put the phone down. The life you save just may be your own.

WEB POLL RESULTS (Go to www.theifp.ca)

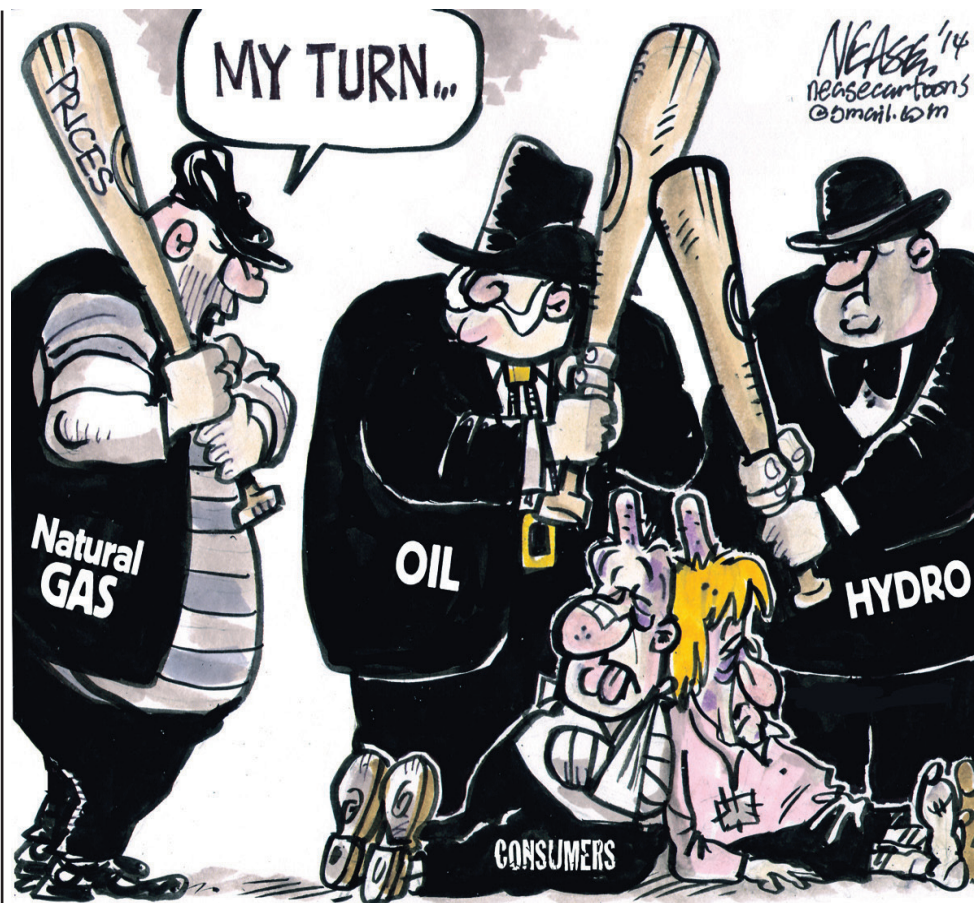
The distracted driving fine rises from \$155 to \$280 effective March 18. Do you think the new amount will be an effective deterrent?

No (82%)
Yes (18%)

The Independent & Free Press

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Letters to the editor

Get tougher on illegal parking

Dear editor,

One day, shortly after the last snowfall, I saw what was just so inconsiderate, unsafe and illegal — a truck parked across the town sidewalk at a nearby residence.

Then, I saw a postie having to squeeze between the high snow banks and the vehicle to deliver the mail.

There was plenty of room to park on the street. Go figure.

I hope our council will start putting a bigger bite on those offenders by beefing up the bylaw enforcement department and hiring full-time staff to look after this. Seems on weekends one only gets an answering service.

Why is Halton Hills 20 years behind the times? Parking and pedestrian safety should be issues in this election. They need to be addressed and acted on before someone gets seriously injured or killed.

Dave Harley,
Georgetown

Hospital visit was impressive

Dear editor,

In the wee hours of Friday morning we had to take our two-year-old daughter to the emergency room in Georgetown.

The nurses and doctor could not do enough for us.

I was amazed at how compassionate they were.

They diagnosed and medicated quickly. We were in and out in less than hour.

Nurse Kim was sweet and understanding to both us and my daughter.

My daughter had ended up being sick on her coat and they sent us home with a hot blanket to wrap her in, numerous travel bags, wipes, juice and a freezie.

I was very impressed with the new renovations as well.

Thanks, especially to Nurse Kim.

Melissa Krause-Cardillo,
Georgetown

Protect water

Dear editor,

I'm concerned about the issues that have been experienced in surrounding communities with their water systems.

After significant housing developments have been established, older parts of the communities started to experience water pressure issues.

The 1,000-acre housing project that is part of 'Vision Georgetown' is essential, but at the same time I have to ask if there are steps being taken to insure liability for any disruption to the existing town infrastructure? As well, are there contingencies in place to reimburse residents if things don't go according to plan?

Rob Demille,
Georgetown

Letters policy

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