

Don't be a fool

The first snow fall and Christmas music reverberating through every retail establishment has brought to everyone's attention that we have officially entered the holiday season.

The time when families, co-workers and friends like to gather together and celebrate, give gifts, give thanks, and just generally have a good time.

Many of us enjoy having a glass of wine or a couple of beers when given a chance to relax with the people that we love, and there is nothing wrong with that.

What is a major problem is how it can affect a person's ability to make the right decision when it comes to getting behind the wheel.

According to the Ministry of Transportation, impaired drivers are responsible for nearly 25 per cent of all fatalities on Ontario roads – 100 per cent of which are preventable deaths.

Regardless of federal and provincial laws and penalties, police enforcement and awareness efforts, and despite the very obvious risk of death or injury to both yourself and everyone else on the roads — people continue to get behind the wheel impaired.

MADD Canada estimates that the number of impaired driving trips taken in Canada each year is around 12.5 million.

While the police have actively increased RIDE enforcement to remind residents of the risks of impaired driving, and programs like HomeJames exist to offer free valet service in your own car right to your doorstep — there will still be impaired drivers on the road.

Every one of us is responsible for reducing those numbers and the potential for tragedy that looms every time a drinking driver gets behind the wheel.

Landing in jail or being responsible for a senseless death because you didn't want to pay for a cab ride is not something that anyone wants for Christmas.

A few drinks is always a few too many, so whether you have to convince yourself, or keep a friend from making the same mistake — it will save lives. Think. Arrive alive.

WEB POLL RESULTS

(Go to www.theifp.ca)

The warning is out that coyotes are moving into urban areas. Have you seen a coyote in the Halton Hills urban area?

- Yes (54%)
- No (46%)

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THE INDEPENDENT & FREE PRESS

905-873-0301

Publisher: Dana Robbins

General manager: Steve Foreman

(sforeman@theifp.ca)

Retail advertising manager: Cindi Campbell

(ccampbell@theifp.ca)

Managing editor: Chris Vernon

(cvernon@metroland.com)

Distribution manager: Nancy Geissler

(ngeissler@theifp.ca)

Classifieds/Real Estate

Kristie Pells

(realestate@theifp.ca)

Classified Call Centre

1-855-415-8237

classified@theifp.ca

Accounting

1-866-773-6575

Editorial

Cynthia Gamble: News editor

(cgamble@theifp.ca)

Lisa Tallyn: Staff writer

(ltallyn@theifp.ca)

Eamonn Maher: Staff writer/sports

(emaher@theifp.ca)

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Letters to the editor

Our vets deserve much better

Since forming a government in 2006, Harper and his Conservatives have slashed \$13.6 billion in program spending.

Most Canadians have been hurt by these cuts, but I would argue none so much as our veterans.

Aside from the closure of at least eight Veterans Affairs offices across the country, pensions have been clawed back and veteran suicide rates among service personnel and reservists have skyrocketed.

From 2004-2014, according to the Department of Defence, more of our military personnel died by suicide than were killed in Afghanistan.

This is a heart-breaking statistic.

The clever propaganda machine has told us that Veterans Affairs spending is up—the budget numbers prove it don't they?

But what isn't explained by the federal Conservatives is that over \$1 billion in those budgets has "lapsed," meaning

it was never spent and went back to the treasury to balance the budget.

They play a shell game with people's lives. Persuade us spending is up but don't actually spend it.

They pat themselves on the back while telling us the budget is balanced—which is what everyone, especially Conservative voters, wants to hear. Meanwhile our service personnel suffer.

Adding insult to very real injury, the recently announced \$200 million commitment, which was initially reported to be forthcoming over six years, is actually payable over 50 years. 50 years!

Harper's Conservatives took over \$1 billion from our veterans services and is now returning only \$200 million and over 50 years.

I am not sure how anyone who says they vote Conservative could also claim they support our troops or look a veteran in the eye.

Regardless of one's stance on our government's decisions to mobilize our military, and I would love for no one's child/husband/sister to ever be hurt in conflict ever again, I think we can all agree that we have a sacred ob-

ligation to support those who bravely bear the trauma of fighting our battles.

The men and women in our Armed Forces deserve our respect, compassion and our generous support as they rebuild and heal upon their return.

The current Conservative government has consistently shown, for years, its callous disregard for our veterans. One hopes Canadians are far too intelligent to fall for this blatant Conservative ploy to buy our votes.

War is messy and the clean-up doesn't end when the sortie is over.

The Conservatives should be ashamed of their deplorable treatment of our veterans.

Diane Ballantyne,
Wellington-Halton Hills

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