

## Police can't pick and choose

Remember Dagnet, the old cop show?

Its chief protagonist was crusty old Joe Friday, the by-the-book detective whose pedantic interviewing skills were summed up best in his cryptic call for information: "Just the facts, ma'am."

In today's world we need more, a whole lot more, said Alain de Botton in his searching account of news-gathering, *The News: A User's Manual*.

In it, he says it is vitally important that a news story not only include the facts (names), but that those facts are put into proper context for public consumption.

Unless we know who was killed, for example, we can never fully find out why.

Which brings us to the horrible story of a 22-year-old Toronto man who was brutally assaulted with a compressed air hose on March 6 at his Mississauga workplace. He died in hospital 12 days later.

Peel Regional Police wouldn't reveal the victim's name, at the request of his family.

This is part of its by-the-book policy.

We think that policy just doesn't quite cut it anymore in that city or any city.

Major police forces like Toronto and Vancouver don't delay in releasing a victim's name.

"We believe you can't be murdered anonymously, that the public has a right to know some of the details around a homicide," said Vancouver police spokesman Const. Brian Montague. Transparency advocates—although understanding the delicate issues at play—argue that secrecy is a recipe for abuse and a lack of accountability—for both criminals and the police.

So said Duff Conacher, co-founder of Democracy Watch and an Ottawa professor.

His key point is this: making the name public could aid in the investigation. The greatest crime book ever written adds heft to his argument.

Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* was a chilling account of the 1959 slaughter of a mid-western farm family by ex-cons Richard Hickock and Perry Smith.

The crime investigation pivoted on a tip to cops from a convicted felon who heard the victim's names on the radio, and thus connected them to the killers (people he'd met in prison).

If the victims' names weren't disclosed, or there was a delay in disclosure, the crime might have gone unsolved and unpunished. We believe in the public's right to know. So should our police. The cops can't have it both ways: providing information when they need the public's (or the media's) assistance, but keeping mute when they don't.

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## Letters to the editor

### Bad spot for a mailbox

An open letter to Mayor Rick Bonnette.

I would like to echo the concerns of Audrey Brown in her letter to you and published in The IFP Jan. 29, 2015.

We are a corner lot located on Delrex Boulevard and Weber at a three-point stop and very close to the George Kennedy School.

The proposed mailbox site is directly in front of our bedroom window and close to our bathroom and kitchen.

We take great pride in our home and property and are equally concerned about an interruption to our peace and quiet and the added worry of garbage and vandalism.

This site was initially looked at on July 16 early afternoon when school was closed for summer.

When school is open or during commuting hours this is a very busy cross section.

There were at least three accidents

here last year including a tow truck which ended up on our front garden after crashing through the stop sign on our neighbours' property.

We have school buses that stop in front of our home and many school children walk to the various schools in the vicinity or wait and get dropped off here by their parents or school buses.

How is this considered a good, safe site? Parents should be concerned, this is an accident waiting to happen.

There is a large public park four houses down which would be an ideal location.

Like Audrey Brown I have also contacted the post office. I was given a file number and told somebody would get back to me within a few days. They didn't.

I called again a short while ago and was informed that my file stated that someone had indeed contacted me and informed me that my alternative proposal was not acceptable and they would be going ahead with the planned site.

Amazing—the post office had a fictitious conversation with me on file. I was then called by an aggressive "customer

service" agent who basically told me I had no rights and my concerns were of no concern to them.

This whole process by the post office has been akin to bullying. How is it that the customers have no choice or voice? I would also like your help in this matter Mr. Mayor and am asking that another less intrusive site be chosen.

Eliza J. Allen,  
Halton Hills

### Letters policy

Letters must include the author's name, address and daytime phone number. Anonymous letters will not be published. Letters should not exceed 150 words and may be edited for content and/or length. Publication is not guaranteed.



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