

Sex assault study needs a look

Victims should never be considered responsible in any way for the crimes to which they're subjected.

That's why many people will recoil against the suggestion sexual assaults can be reduced by training potential victims to avoid them.

However, evidence gathered by researchers at the University of Guelph and two other Canadian universities makes a compelling case that training young women on how to guard themselves against sexual assault can, in fact, make them safer.

Hundreds of first-year female students at the schools received intensive training on how to reduce their risk of rape — particularly so-called "acquaintance rape."

In a 12-hour program, they were shown how to forcefully shut down unwanted advances and to do such things as to keep doors open when in a room with a male. They also received self-defence training.

Meanwhile, another group of first-year female students were offered only brochure-type education on this material. Then, a year later, both groups were surveyed as to whether they had experienced rape, other sexual assault or attempts to commit these offences against them in the intervening period.

The results offered statistically significant evidence that the better-trained women were far more unlikely to be victims of rape or attempted rape.

The jarring study, published recently in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, has led to suggestions that this type of teaching should be rolled out much more widely and even be considered as an addition to secondary school curriculum. Given the heat over developing and delivering updated sex-education that's now brewing in Ontario, such a measure could be a challenging one to bring about.

But politicians and policy-makers should pay attention to this research. The Ontario government has already signalled it is serious about addressing sexual assault in this province. Expanding the program used in this university research might be a different direction than the province's public education campaign.

After all, the recently launched, provocative, provincial campaign has its focus urging bystanders to step in to prevent rape, and renounce rape culture as well.

That's a more comfortable thing to digest: Putting the onus on individuals, other than just potential victims, to take more responsibility. These are definitely strategies worth following. However, the university research results can't and shouldn't be ignored.

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Letters to the editor

Mr. Chong not a yes man

Re: Rick Hall's letter regarding MP Michael Chong.

Rick Hall (Just following orders won't do Mr. Chong) is obviously unaware of the Reform Act which Michael Chong brought to Parliament as a private members' bill.

The Reform Act is a federal bill designed to re-balance power in the House of Commons and strengthen our democracy.

It strives to make our MPs and political parties more representative, responsible and accountable to Canadians.

Hopefully this will be passed by the Senate this week.

Far from being a 'yes man' Mr. Chong has not been afraid to disagree with the Prime Minister on a number of occasions.

Gloria Wilson,
Acton

Our town is not homophobic

Not too long ago I read a post on a Facebook page that is for people in Georgetown or people who grew up here.

The post was about a Halton Hills worker yelling homophobic comments at two young men.

As someone who has lived in this beautiful town all my life reading something like this made me so angry.

I couldn't believe that this Halton Hills worker did this.

After this story was posted on Facebook Councillor Moya Johnson posted about the same incident and I have to say that I am really proud of the way that this was handled.

Moya stated that she was posting for the mayor.

I think that everyone in Georgetown should know that we do not discriminate against people and it is not okay for people to yell homophobic slurs in this town.

In this town we accept people, no matter what they look like or who they love.

This is Georgetown, we love our people and I think our people should know that.

I feel that everyone in the community should know just how much our mayor and towns people care.

Samantha McGowen,
Georgetown

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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