

· EDITORIAL ·

# Working smoke alarms an absolute essential in dwellings

A terrible albeit preventable tragedy in Oshawa recently should serve as a sobering reminder to all of us that working smoke alarms are an absolute must in every dwelling.

Recently, a fire at 116 Centre St. N. in Durham - which investigators determined had originated on the main level in the kitchen area - claimed the lives of Lindsey Bonchek and her children, nine-year-old Maddie and four-year-old Jack and neighbour Steven Macdonald, who also lived in the divided house.

Macdonald was actively attempting to help others escape the fire before becoming trapped in the burning building.

The Ontario Fire Marshal investigation into the tragic circumstances that led to the fire revealed a piece of disheartening, frustrating news.

Although there was wiring in the house used in the installation of smoke alarms, investigators said there wasn't a single working smoke alarm in the home - one that might have provided a warning and perhaps precious seconds to allow some or all of the victims to escape the burning building.

The knowledge that something so tragic was also so preventable shook Rick Derstroff, fire investigations supervisor for the Ontario Fire Marshal, to his core at a press conference.

"It makes it even worse when you have young children involved, so there's going to be an empty desk at school," said Derstroff, who was visibly shaken when delivering the news.

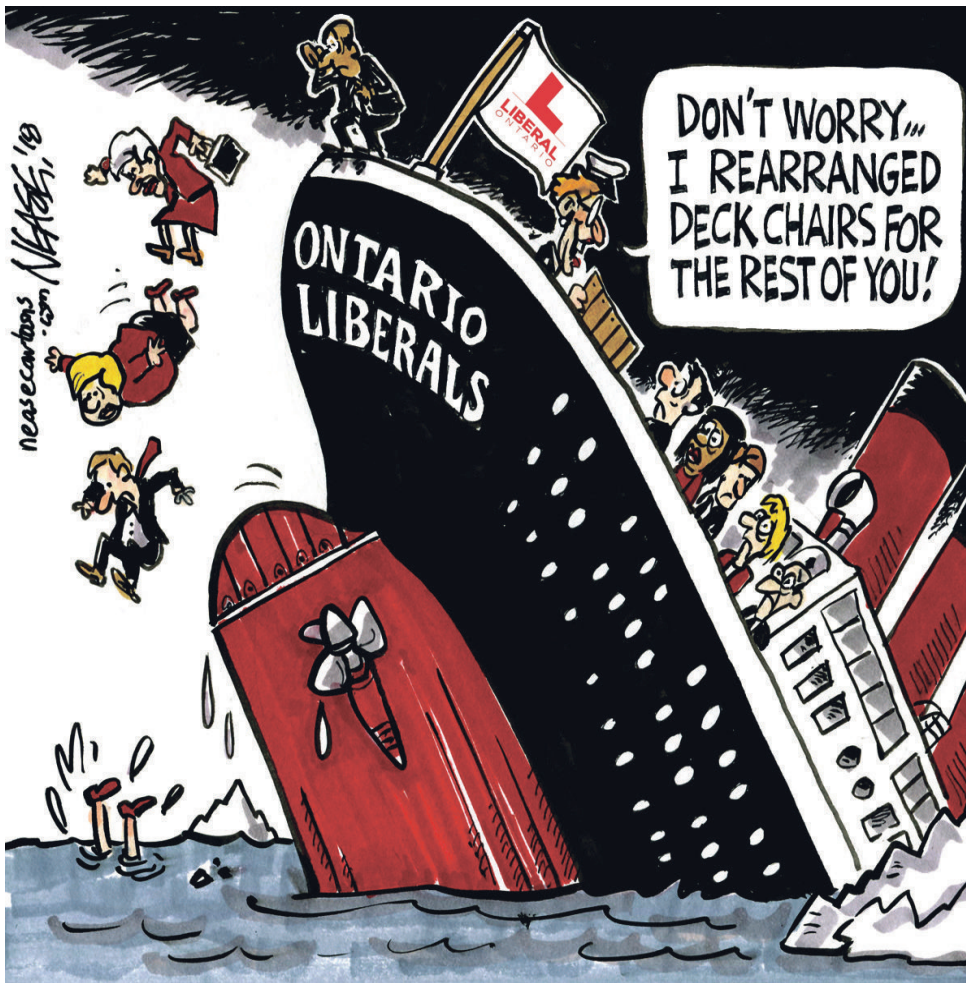
All homeowners, landlords and tenants should test their smoke alarms right now.

It's the law that all landlords and homeowners have working smoke alarms on every level of their home and outside all sleeping areas, as well as working carbon monoxide alarms.

If you haven't already done so, go home; check your smoke detectors to make sure they work. Don't wait. Doing so just might save your life and those of your family members.

If the deadly, tragic events of Jan. 8 don't move you to action to ensure there are working smoke alarms on every level of your home, then surely nothing will.

The devices are cheap compared to the cost of a life.



## We're living in a culture of fear

To the editor:

"The culture we have does not make people feel good about themselves. We're teaching the wrong things. And you have to be strong enough to say if the culture doesn't work, don't buy it."

This quote from Tuesdays with Morrie is an excellent way to sum up the kind of culture we live in: the culture of fear.

Taking parents as an example, children are being taught the concept of "stranger danger." Teaching this to our children is one of the worst things a parent can do. Taken too far, it creates a sense of mistrust among strangers. Most child kidnap victims are taken by a family mem-

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ber in a custody battle, but we are fine with leaving our children alone with family.

The culture of fear has also caused a mass amount of consumption in society and everyone is victim to it. What happens is, companies promote fear to make people buy their product. For example, home security systems show commercials of robbers breaking in and being scared by an alarm. Though, the number of robberies is dropping, and the number of homes with alarm systems is rising.

Brendan Devlin

## Let's be clear on immigration

1. Canada Pension Plan benefits must be earned and are determined by how

much is contributed and how many years are put in. Poorly paid and precariously employed workers, among others, receive much less than the maximum. The average monthly amount paid out in 2017 was \$642.92.

2. Seniors receive OAS and, if they qualify, GIS, only after a lifetime of work.

3. Immigrants (not refugees) do not receive any benefits, financial or otherwise. In my time, immigrants did not receive one cent and I am not aware of any change. They had to prove they had enough money to keep going for at least six months.

4. Immigrants (not refugees) do not qualify for OHIP for six months. If they need treatment, they must pay.

5. Subsidized long-term

care, medical equipment, prescription medication and "free" home care services — again, only after a lifetime of work.

Yes, there is a humanitarian dimension to refugees and, yes, we need people to keep our economy going when we retire, but let's be clear on who gets what and why.

Maurice Simm

## Letters to the Editor



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## CONTACT US

### The Independent & Free Press

280 Guelph Street, Unit 77  
Georgetown, ON L7G 4B1  
Phone: 905-873-0301  
Classifieds: 905-234-1016  
Fax: 905-873-0398

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For all delivery inquiries, please e-mail [ssoles@metroland.com](mailto:ssoles@metroland.com) or call 905-234-1019.



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