

· EDITORIAL ·

# We should fight against flu

There was a compelling yet tragic reason why more than 2,500 people who hadn't been vaccinated against influenza last fall flooded into special clinics in Guelph in recent days to do so.

It explains why those clinics were jammed with panicky parents holding their kids by the hand or carrying them in their arms.

And it explains why, even though free flu shots had been available in Guelph for months, local public health officials extended those special flu clinics all last week.

The reason was that children are dying from influenza.

In Guelph, flu claimed the life of seven-year-old Boyqara Dahi on Feb. 8, just eight days after 12-year-old Layna Vu Pollard died from the same illness. Not far away, Bobby Smylie, 10, of Waterdown, died from flu on Feb. 4.

The illness took hold of the youngsters suddenly.

Their condition deteriorated rapidly. And before their shocked parents knew what was happening, they were gone.

The fear of experiencing the same devastating loss, the dread of watching their loved ones suffer and the desire to protect the vulnerable prompted thousands of parents in and around Guelph to have their children vaccinated.

But why did it take something horrible to happen to make them act?

Influenza hits Canada every year. For most people, the fever, muscular pain and coughing it brings will leave them flat on their backs for a few miserable days before they recover.

But flu also kills. People over 65 are the most common victims, but young, otherwise healthy people also die.

According to reports, the two children who died in Guelph had not been vaccinated.

This year's flu viruses are taking a higher-than-usual toll on children in Canada. Perhaps it didn't need to be so bad.

The best way to fight influenza is to prevent its spread. The best way to do this, health officials agree, is through mass, public inoculation campaigns.

The Ontario government has offered free flu vaccinations for years. People can get one at their doctors' offices, pharmacies or special clinics.

But precious few do.

Only 34 per cent of Ontarians got the flu shot in a 12-month period in 2015-16, according to Statistics Canada. The majority who don't should jettison their complacency or suspicion.

They need to understand it's not just about individuals protecting themselves, it's about all of us protecting each other.

The higher the percentage of the population that is immunized, the greater the odds each of us and our loved ones will have of avoiding the flu.

Our hearts go out to the families who have lost children this year.

Our hopes are that the wave of parents having children inoculated will not be a one-time phenomenon.



## Media is biased

The editorial of Jan. 25, "Helping distinguish 'news' from 'opinion,'" leaves the reader with the false impression that news reporting is unbiased. The selection of facts (what stories are chosen) and how they are reported (determined by the sympathies of the reporter) are both factors in influencing the readership. They are governed by a particular agenda. That is why we have more liberal and more conservative news sites.

A newspaper, and the media in general, understandably cannot escape this lack of objectivity. However, it should be acknowledged, and the readership should always be aware of underlying philosophies. A case in point in the Enterprise is the coverage of an incident some time

ago when an individual accused another of entering the wrong bathroom. The incident was made a front-page story for more than one issue and all sympathy was directed to the accused individual. This coverage and others similarly show the bias of the paper.

Curtis Van Dyken

## Private media dying

It was disheartening to read Torstar's John Honderich's piece on Canada's struggling private media sector.

Our government's inaction must be bewildering to casualties of media downsizing. As the feds feed hundreds of millions of tax dollars into a public broadcaster, as they exempt multinational foreign media corporations from taxes, Canadian private media lan-

guish.

And while we're all busy laughing at Trump's hair and nodding agreement with hysterical pundits shouting that he is a despot in the making, Canada's own prime minister smiles and does nothing as our private media sector, the only thing that holds governments and prime ministers to account, loses its voice.

Canadians need to pay attention to what's happening right here at home. Our private media sector is the only thing that stands between we the people and governments that can do anything they want.

Vern Hodgins

## Zero courage

It's nothing short of despicable that all three Ontario Progressive Conservative leadership candidates - and

the party itself - have shown zero courage when it comes to supporting the one policy that gives our kids a fighting chance against the growing threat of climate change - and that's carbon pricing.

For all his shortcomings and alleged sexual harassment of teenage girls, at least Patrick Brown understood that a sensibly applied carbon tax can do two things: it's by far the most efficient way to get us off fossil fuels and cut climate warming greenhouse gases. It's also a sure-fire way to put more money back into the pockets of most Ontarians than they will pay out in higher costs for gasoline, home heating, and everything else affected by carbon pricing.

I hope this politically convenient but immoral choice comes back to haunt all Ontario PCs.

Liz Armstrong

## ABOUT US



The Georgetown Independent & Free Press, published every Thursday, is a division of the Metroland Media Group Ltd., a wholly-owned subsidiary of Torstar Corporation. The Metroland family of newspapers is comprised of more than 80 community publications across Ontario.



The Independent & Free Press is a member of the National NewsMedia Council. Complainants are urged to bring their concerns to the attention of the newspaper and, if not satisfied, write The National NewsMedia Council, Suite 200, 890 Yonge St., Toronto, ON M4W 2H2. Phone: 416-340-1981 Web: www.mediacouncil.ca



newsroom@theifp.ca  
IndependentAndFreePress  
@IFP\_11

## · LETTERS & COMMENTARY ·

## 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

**Letters to the editor**  
All letters must be fewer than 200 words and include your name and telephone number for verification purposes. We reserve the right to edit, condense or reject letters.

**Delivery**  
For all delivery inquiries, please e-mail ssoles@metroland.com or call 905-234-1019.



## WHO WE ARE

**Publisher**  
Neil Oliver  
**General Manager**  
Steve Foreman  
**Retail Advertising Manager**  
Cindi Campbell

**Regional Managing Editor**  
Chris Vernon  
**Regional Managing Digital Editor**  
Robyn Wilkinson  
**Distribution Representative**  
Iouliana Polar

**Classified/Real Estate**  
Kristie Pells  
**Regional Production Manager**  
Manuel Garcia  
**Production**  
Shelli Harrison