

· EDITORIAL ·

Ottawa's strong signal on partner violence

When it comes to intimate partner violence, Canada's laws are behind reality. The result is too often that abuse victims are re-victimized by their abusers and the system. Cases move too slowly to be effective. In too many areas, the law simply doesn't reflect what is really happening.

So it is good news that the federal government is moving assertively to update the law, under the auspices of Bill C-75, introduced to Parliament recently.

Here's a key example of how the changes will better reflect reality. It is common knowledge that accused abusers, if they are granted bail, reoffend at a much higher rate than people charged with other crimes. Court-imposed restraining orders are often ineffective. There is ample research to back this up. So the new law will levy a reverse onus on repeat abusers - they will have to make a successful case as to why they should be released, instead of the Crown making the case for why they should not be released on bail.

Another example: The proposed amendment would recognize that strangulation is more serious than common assault, and would recognize it alongside assault causing bodily harm and assault with a weapon. Research suggests that choking is often a sign of escalating violence; according to an American study, women who are choked are four times more likely to be killed than those who were not choked.

Another change would update language in the legislation to more accurately reflect current circumstances. The terms "spouse" and "common-law partner" are now most commonly used. But according to Statistics Canada data, more than half of all domestic-violence courts cases between 2005 and 2011 involved dating partners. They made up 54 per cent of all cases, while spousal violence made up for 46 per cent. So the amended legislation will use the term intimate partner violence to better reflect today's reality.

Bill C-75 covers more than intimate partner violence. It also reforms the justice system by getting rid of peremptory challenges of jurors and changing the way juries are selected. It restricts the use of preliminary inquiries to serious offences and changes the way courts now handle offences such as failing to appear or breaching release conditions.

Overall, it is the most sweeping legal reform introduced in recent memory. In some areas it is being widely hailed, in others not so much. But on the profoundly important subject of intimate partner violence, these changes move in the right direction and send a strong and welcome signal.



· LETTERS & COMMENTARY ·

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How does mayor justify a pay raise?

Dear Mayor Bonnette and council,

I just finished reading last week's article in regards to how you and the Halton Hills council decided to vote yourselves 10 per cent raises.

Let me get this straight. You commissioned ML Consulting to compare your salaries to those of "neighbouring" municipalities and you found out that you were getting paid less.

How much did that study cost the taxpayers of Halton Hills?

Why couldn't you just pick up a phone and a calculator and do the comparisons yourself?

The salaries of public officials are made public.

What where the neigh-

bouring municipalities you compared? Guelph, Orangeville and Rockwood, or did you compare your salaries to Brampton, Mississauga and Toronto?

Of course the staff of larger municipalities are paid more. They have much more responsibilities. They deal with larger issues in regards to transportation, waste management and zoning issues. They also have a much larger taxpayer base from which to pay salaries.

When you were hired for your job here in Halton Hills you were aware of your salary, so how can you just decide that now you should be paid more?

How do you justify giv-

ing yourselves 10 per cent raises? Have your duties and responsibilities increased from last year?

Also, when do you and the council start receiving this raise? Is it retroactive or does it start when Bill C-44 (the one-third tax exempt allowance) is removed on Jan. 1, 2019?

As a taxpaying citizen of Halton Hills I would appreciate your response to these questions.

Matthew Andrews

Different rules for politicians

I would like to express my concern for the raises that the mayor and council-

lors have voted for themselves, with council's salary going from \$31,555 to 39,668. The mayor's pay is going from \$90,563 to \$114,783.

Looks like the provincial government has taken away the one-third tax exemption on the salary that they currently receive, so council has decided to vote themselves a raise. Why are they entitled to such a large tax break for working for the municipality, which they are well paid?

This does not seem fair to me and they should not be allowed to give themselves a salary increase.

One set of rules for taxpayers - different rules for politicians

Since 2018 is an election year, why don't we see what the Halton Hills taxpayers have to say by having a referendum.

Steve Prentice

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