

OPIOID DEATHS A GREATER THREAT THAN GUNS

There's a scourge on our streets killing innocent people, and despite the headlines recently, especially in Toronto, little is being done to make our streets safer.

Politicians talk a good game about getting tough on the problem, yet solutions remain out of reach and more people die.

As of July 25, Toronto recorded 30 gun-related homicides, but there's a greater evil lurking in the shadows of our towns and cities than illegal guns - fentanyl and carfentanil.

Statistics Canada data shows that in the first six months of 2017, there were 1,460 opioid-related deaths in the country. To put things in perspective, the number of people murdered in Canada in 2016 by guns was 223.

In Toronto alone, seven people died between Aug. 2-13 after ingesting drugs containing fentanyl or carfentanil, and surely more will die before the month is out.

And what do our politicians do? Premier Doug Ford pumps \$25 million into fighting gun violence and then abruptly his Minister of Health places a moratorium on the creation of overdose prevention sites.

Ontario "will be reviewing the evidence and speaking to experts to ensure that any continuation of

Fentanyl and carfentanil have opened an evil doorway across our country and it's time our politicians slammed it shut.

Supervised Consumption Services and Overdose Prevention Sites are going to introduce people into rehabilitation. Until this review is complete, these sites are requested not to open until further notice," states a memo sent to Ontario doctors on Aug. 10.

We may not have the logic skills of a Vulcan, but to us it seems the province has its priorities backwards.

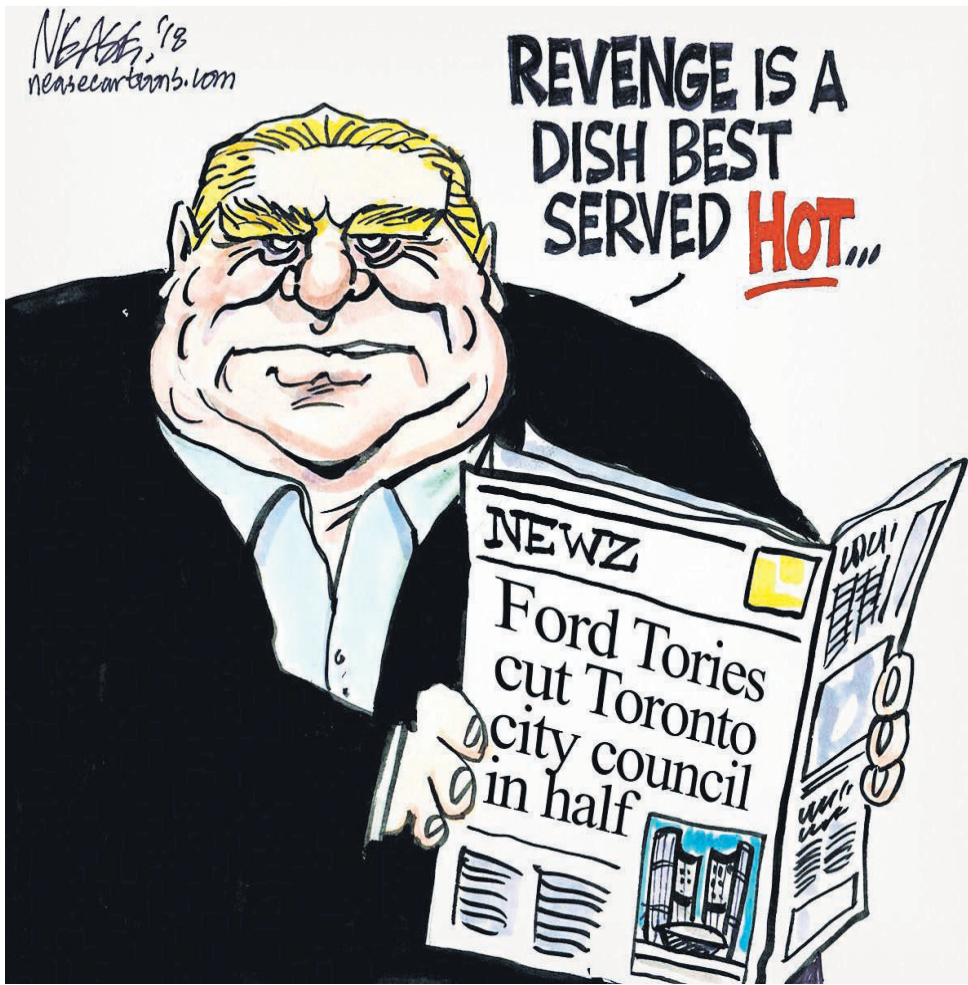
Illegal gun crime is no doubt a serious issue worthy of our attention, and while the Premier's money targeted for combatting gun crime is laudable, it behooves the province to tackle the fentanyl and carfentanil problem with the same vigor as illegal gun crime.

However, it's easier for politicians to jump on the gun crime soapbox than dealing with a drug problem rooted in organized crime, poverty, addiction, homelessness, China and mental health.

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If not, we may be on the cusp of a national tragedy akin to the crack epidemic that ravaged the U.S. from 1984 to 1990.

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MAKING TIME FOR YOU IF YOU WANT TIME, YOU HAVE TO MAKE TIME, WRITES MCGREGOR



MELANIE
MCGREGOR
Column

You can give yourself permission to take care of yourself. To slow down. To take a break. Is this news to you?

We often go through our days thinking that we always have to be on the move. That productivity rules. That we are somehow letting someone, even ourselves, down if we aren't doing something and doing it perfectly.

But, taking a break and treating yourself well is something. It's time that you use to recharge, relax, and get your mind off of whatever is bothering or distracting you. Being kind to yourself means something different to everyone - there is no "one size fits all" - and it may very well be one of the most important and ful-

filling things you do all day.

'Me time'

The key step to start with that is challenging for many is giving yourself the all-important permission. It could be something as simple as deciding not to do the dishes after dinner one night and catching up the next day. Or asking your partner to do homework with kids while you read or meditate for 15 minutes. Or taking a break from work to walk outside and get refreshed. Even if it takes baby steps to get there, making small strides towards more "me time" can pay off big time in terms of better stress management and overall well-being.

Finding the time vs. making the time

One of the most common things we hear is people saying, "I just can't find the time to take a break." But, you will nev-

er just find the time for anything. If you want time, you have to make time. Set aside some precious minutes wherever you can.

And look at how you are really spending your time - could the half hour you spend mindlessly surfing the web be better used for a relaxing bubble bath or some energizing yoga? Choose whatever helps you feel positive and calm. Come up with some quick go-tos for busy days and plan longer periods of time when you can to do what means most to you.

We promise you...it's OK, and important, to do things for yourself. Believe that yourself and you're on the right track.

Melanie McGregor is the communications and advancement specialist at the Canadian Mental Health Association Halton Region Branch, which provides mental health/addictions community support and education. Visit www.halton.cmha.ca for more information and follow @cmha-halton on Twitter for news and updates.

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