

EDITORIAL

Soft sentence

A recent drunk driving sentence has outraged anti-drinking and driving advocates and shows that our court systems are out-of-touch with the desires of the people it is designed to protect.

On Oct. 9, an Ottawa-area man was convicted of refusing to provide a breath sample to police after being stopped last December.

He was sentenced to two years less a day and given a three-year licence suspension.

It was the man's 26th drinking-and-driving related conviction.

According to the Toronto Star, the man's own lawyer called his clients record of drinking-and-driving offences "horrendous" and John Bates — the founder of Mothers Against Drunk Driving — said the sentence shows that people like the 35-year-old Ottawa man should not be allowed to drive again.

MADD has been pushing for a permanent licence suspension for people who have been convicted for two drinking-and-driving offences.

Clearly, a man with 26 prior convictions should not be allowed to drive ever again.

Are the Ottawa judges waiting for this man to kill someone before his licence is taken away?

Statistics show that approximately 2,500 people are killed in Canada yearly in alcohol related accidents and according to Bates "it's the single largest killer of our young people."

We have a hard time believing that our court system is so out-of-touch with current social trends that it would allow a man like this to ever get behind the wheel again, yet that is exactly what will happen in three short years.

As someone in our office said: "They might as well just give him a gun."

It is a hard statement to dispute.

A person driving a one-ton car, who is not able to properly control that vehicle because of alcohol impairment, will kill as easily as a man walking down the street with a gun.

In the next few weeks, police forces across the province will crank-up their annual RIDE campaigns as they attempt to take a proactive approach to curbing drunk driving. And statistics show that people are drinking and driving far less than they have in the past.

But unless the court system starts penalizing people appropriately for this potentially deadly offence people will continue to die on the roads of this province.

It is time that our justice system realizes that the public will no longer stand for leniency when dealing with criminals who commit these murders.

A road through the Quarry

Sirs:

Last evening my wife and I watched on TV a replay of 23 Nov./92 proceedings of our local council.

Came the turn of Diane Van De Valk to address council. She then very clearly spoke her message, re "Non Enforcement of By-Law Relating to Rebuilding of a Road Through Acton Quarry Dump Site" and a meeting, promised from certain members, which never occurred!

She concluded by stating her intent to approach project "80" as her next step in pursuing this matter.

Two aspects of this situation to

me stand out.

1. The direct, concise manner in which Diane presented facts, her frustration and her future plan of action.

2. The resulting conduct and behavior from council as a result.

I would like to register my support and agreement, with what this young lady has done. Here to me is an excellent example of dedication and perseverance!

She is using the right of free speech. To make herself heard and to get an answer to her question!

Perhaps our community could use more of this sort of energy!

Thank you,
Lew Ward

Top posters



Members of Branch 120 (Georgetown) of the Royal Canadian Legion recently handed out awards for their Remembrance Day poster contest. The top poster makers from local schools were awarded a special certificate from the Legion at a ceremony last Friday.

NEC should remain independent

Dear Editor:

Recently the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) has again come under attack.

It is understandable that, in a time of economic recession, the concerns for the environment may take second place with respect to economic pressures.

However, I believe it would be wrong to "shuffle" the responsibilities of the NEC and redistribute them to Regional Governments, as one group (NELOC) has suggested.

There are several reasons why to maintain a central planning agency, and one of them is purely an economic reason.

1. The NEC was formed, during a conservative government, but with the unanimous support of all parties in the Ontario Legislature. At the time our government had the vision that the Escarpment should be protected in its entirety by a single legislation, the Niagara Escarpment Act. The resulting Commission, after several stages of planning, is now in a stable phase, and it enforces consistent rules across the whole Escarpment.

Abandoning this vision would mean questioning hundreds of decisions and opening hundreds of local developers vs. Town planner vs. environmentalists conflicts. This is what our legislators wanted to avoid in the first place.

Imagine the face of the Canadian ambassador to the UN, when he would have to announce that the UNESCO recognized "Biosphere Reserve" has been broken in a dozen pieces!

2. We simply cannot afford the costs in bureaucracy and litigation which would result from "distribut-

ing" the responsibilities of the NEC to multiple regions. We cannot afford the duplication that would inevitably be created as each Region may choose to create its own Escarpment Commission to protect their own piece of the Escarpment. We are over-governed. No doubt about it.

Never mind the NEC, we could save hundreds of millions if we could reduce or eliminate the Regions, by transferring their responsibilities to the Provincial government and to the local municipalities that are directly controlled by the voters.

3. After suggestions from myself and others, the NEC was transferred under the control of the Ministry of the Environment (MOE).

Perhaps this agency should now formally become a special branch of this Ministry. This would eliminate once and for all the uncertainties about its budget, its composition and its future. The Niagara Escarpment Act is a piece of Provincial Legislation and our MPPs (whom we elect directly) are responsible for its application, province-wide.

4. Transferring the responsibilities of the NEC to the Regions may create multiple pockets of local

political pressure, and possible confrontations between adjacent Regions.

For what reason would anyone think that several bunches of bureaucrats can handle government matters better than ONE bunch of bureaucrats?

I prefer having to deal, check and trust one bunch. The very fact that we are talking about it is proof that the NEC is in continuous close scrutiny.

5. The Provincial Government just went through a five-year review of the NEC. Hundreds of citizens and many groups participated in the process. If anything, the NEC has found considerable support in the population including, for example, the members of the Coalition on the Niagara Escarpment (CONE). The members of NELOC, I am sure, had their objections raised during that process.

In conclusion, I support the position of councilor Robson, who represents Halton Hills in the NEC, a person whose knowledge and integrity are unquestionable on this matter.

Sincerely,
Giuseppe Gori
Family Coalition Party of Ontario
and Escarpment landowner

Letters Welcomed

Halton Hills This Week welcomes your letters. Letters must be signed and include your full name and address. Names will be withheld on request.

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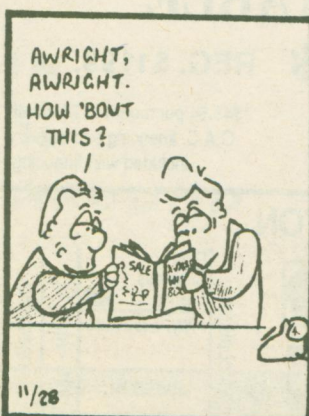
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THIS WEEK

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For Pete's Sake



by Roe