

OPINION

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Watch what you heat

Thankfully, most of us will never have to endure the horror of a house fire or its long-ranging after-effects.

For many people, a fire is their worst nightmare — property destroyed, personal mementoes reduced to charred rubble, not to mention the obvious danger fire poses to an individual's health.

This week (Oct. 8-14) marks Fire Prevention Week in Ontario and this year's theme is Prevent Cooking Fires— Watch What You Heat. Fire services across the province want to increase awareness about cooking-related fire hazards and reduce the number of injuries and fatalities from kitchen fires.

Careless cooking is the No. 1 cause of preventable fires in Ontario as there are approximately 1,500 cooking-related fires each year in the province— and that doesn't include fires not reported.

Provincial statistics indicate that these types of blazes are the leading cause of fire-related injuries in Ontario and the second leading cause of fire-related fatalities.

There is no great mystery behind these statistics—the trouble starts because someone wasn't paying attention. It is very easy to place a pan with cooking oil on the stove, turn on the burner, then get distracted. Minutes is sometimes all it takes to turn a kitchen into an inferno.

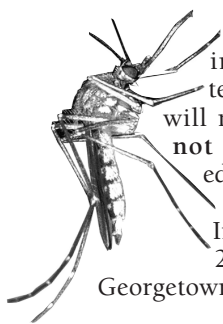
"Pay full attention when you're cooking and stay in the kitchen," suggests Bernard Moyle, Fire Marshal of Ontario. "Most cooking fires occur when people get distracted or are careless and often because they are intoxicated."

The Ontario Fire Marshal's office offers these tips to prevent kitchen fires:

- Keep a large lid near the stove when cooking — if a pot catches fire, slide the lid over the pot and turn off the stove.
- Stay in the kitchen while you cook — particularly if you are using oil or high temperatures.
- Wear tight-fitting or rolled up sleeves when using the stove.
- Keep combustible items such as cooking utensils and paper towels, a safe distance from your stove — they can easily ignite if they are too close to a burner.

Something bugging you?

Send us a letter!



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Building on diversity makes a better community

Dear editor,
Re: Diversity March is not 'reclaiming our space' (Letter to the editor, Sept. 20, *Independent & Free Press*).

When people hear the comment that "Georgetown and a lot of Halton are known for racism," it's easy to understand why they become defensive, feeling that they, personally, have been accused of being racist. What this comment suggests, on the other hand, is that there is a perception among many people outside of this region that racism does, indeed, exist within our communities.

This perception, whether we like it or not, is fairly widespread. I have encountered it personally, when I

worked in Toronto, and have heard similar reports from friends and family members who live or work outside of the region. Whether this stems from the visit by the KKK in 1993, or from other events since, seems like a pointless discussion. In an effort to look forward and be pro-active, rather than reactive, the youth involved with POSSE (Peer Outreach Support Services and Education) are to be commended for organizing a March for Diversity with the objective of sending a clear message that everybody is welcome in our community. End of message.

When Sarah McLean writes "Do not thrust your beliefs and ethics upon us with little regard for our cul-

ture and heritage," I have to wonder which part of "Please feel welcome in our community" she objects to. I also have to wonder what exactly she means by white culture, since a search of the Internet under this topic brings up an incredible variety of sites, including some that might fall under the category of promoting hatred. I suspect there would be as many different definitions of "white culture" as there are shades of "white".

However, if Ms. McLean is interested in sharing the history, artistic achievements and traditions of her culture and heritage, whatever it might be, I would like to invite her to join the North Halton Cultural Awareness Council (NHCAC), whose mandate is to encourage understanding and acceptance among people of all different cultures and backgrounds.

The NHCAC also supported the March for Diversity, recognizing that, in order for communities to thrive, they must provide an environment where all residents can realize their full potential, both as individuals and citizens. It is in our own best interests to tap into this goldmine of diverse ideas and talents and to build on diversity as the foundation for a healthy, vibrant community.

Judy Scannell,
North Halton Cultural
Awareness Council

Bias towards others is bias towards yourself

Dear editor,
As a postscript to the successful and poignant march celebrating human diversity in Halton recently (which my family and I hope will become an annual event), I thought it important to point something out to those persons who truly believe their "race" is superior to others'.

As detailed in the excellent PBS documentary *Journey of Man* (2003) science has recently proven that all human beings originate from African tribes that undertook various journeys throughout Europe, Asia, Australia and ultimately North and South America within the last 50,000 years (a very fast time frame consid-

ering how old the planet is itself). Since this appears to be the case, I submit to Halton residents: when and if you direct insecurities, biases and hatred toward a fellow human, you are in effect, hating yourselves—and what good can come of that? An attitude is far easier to change than the firm reality of our shared bloodline and DNA.

My family congratulates the coordinators of the wonderful diversity march and picnic. We look forward to more events of this nature in Georgetown.

P. Roe,
Georgetown

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