

OPINION

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Dirty secret is out

Throwing money at a problem to make it go away is a favourite tactic of governments. However, we're hoping the McGuinty Liberals aren't using this strategy to clean up the mess that has become the Ontario Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

Ontario Ombudsman André Marin last week unveiled his scathing report on the board, calling it a "colossal failure" that has embraced a "rule-obsessed, paper-shuffling culture". Victims of crime have been treated with "bureaucratic indifference and suspicion."

Established in 1971 by the provincial government in an effort to help provide financial compensation to victims of violent crime, Marin has found the board has become awash in so much red tape that half of the applicants eventually give up their claims out of frustration.

The board takes an average of three years to process applications while similar boards in Quebec and British Columbia take only two and three months respectively. Marin found that forms from victims have been returned for such mundane reasons as forgetting to dot an "i" in a name. By this October there will be a backlog of more than 17,500 cases.

Unbelievable.

Marin puts the blame solely on Queen's Park, saying the board is a \$40-million operation being run on a \$20-million budget.

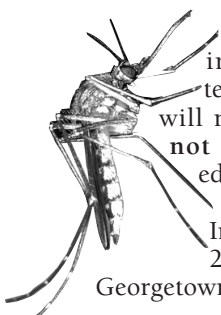
Attorney-General Michael Bryant was quick to vow immediate action on Marin's report and ponied up nearly \$21 million within two days of the report's release. He also appointed Ontario Chief Justice Roy McMurtry to make recommendations on how to revamp the board.

However, it should be noted that Bryant's ministry was fully aware of the board's problems as a 2005 e-mail from his ministry said: "The ministry may be vulnerable to criticism...should what we have learned about the (board's) current status and practices get out."

Well, the government's "dirty little secret" (as Marin described it) is out. We're hoping this problem doesn't go away now that some money has been thrown its way and that the provincial government starts helping victims of crime instead of victimizing them again.

Something bugging you?

Send us a letter!



Letters to the editor must include an address and daytime telephone number. Unsigned letters will not be published. Letters should not exceed 200 words and may be edited for content and/or length.

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Steve Nease



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Town should realize Willow Park is unique

Dear editor,

I am writing to object to the way the Town of Halton Hills has treated the Willow Park Ecology Centre Steering Committee (WPSC) as reported in the article "Mandate changes for Ecology Centre" on February 9.

Since it was formed in 1996, the steering committee has functioned very well as a partnership of the Town, Credit Valley Conservation and numerous community organizations. It has received monies from the Town, generous support from the Halton area community as well as 11 grants from nine different funding bodies totaling well over \$300,000. These funds built the Centre and generated educational programs. As a collaborative, the WPSC has carried out its mandate very successfully, winning numerous national and regional awards by "providing a focus for ecological based education and recreation in the Town of Halton Hills" (WPEC Master Plan, May 1999).

I find it very disconcerting to read that the Town of Halton Hills puts the WPEC on the same basis as all the other park facilities in Town. It is definitely NOT the same as other passive parks. It's a unique gem which needs to be recognized as such. Valuable school programs, summer camps and community events, run by the WPSC, function to inform and enlighten folks both locally and regionally.

Especially in this age of emerging awareness about environmental issues such as climate change, the Town needs to increase its support for this facility. They need to find a way to step forward in terms of finances and energy to support WPEC's objectives which are timely in today's world.

Our citizenry, young and old, will

need to become increasingly aware of how to live more sustainability on this planet. Collectively, we have a moral responsibility to lead in the coming environmental revolution, not cut back on such a valuable award-winning community resource.

Ruth Kuchinad,

Former co-ordinator, WPEC

Peterborough

Mother was too trusting of stranger

Dear editor,

RE: Marcia Baker's Feb. 9 letter, "Stranger's kindness leaves mom smiling."

Call me jaded, but isn't Ms. Baker just a little too trusting in today's society?

Although I have no children, I do have a seven-year-old nephew. If a "nice man" gave him a gingerbread cookie, I would certainly confront

him as to his motives. That would come right after I gave my nephew a stern talking to for accepting candy from strangers.

What on earth was this woman thinking?

It just goes to prove that you need a fishing licence to catch fish, but anyone can have a kid. Unbelievable!

Matt Penny,

Georgetown

Driver's kindness was greatly appreciated

Dear editor,

I would like to show my appreciation to the young lady who came to my rescue Feb. 1. I was at the intersection of Fourth Line and 10 Sideroad with a flat tire.

It was very cold, windy and snowing and I stopped this young woman, Carrie, hoping she had a cell phone (she did).

We contacted my auto service and she insisted she wait for me until they came. I felt I had

imposed enough and she went on her way. A few minutes later she returned and said she couldn't sleep if she left me alone (I am a senior).

We sat in my car and chatted until CAA arrived.

Thank you so much again, Carrie. You helped restore the faith.

Millie Edmonds,

Georgetown