

## Butting in

While we wholeheartedly support the Ontario's Liberal government plan to ban smoking in cars with children, we wonder how in the world it will be policed.

Is it realistic to expect law enforcement officers to be on the lookout for smokers with young passengers, or will fellow motorists be asked to be the eyes—and nose—of this new provincial law?

Will children exposed to second-hand smoke in the family car face the prospect of testifying against a parent in court?

The province's decision to propose a new law in the spring legislative session is a no-brainer considering the startling data provided by provincial health officials.

Children who breathe second-hand smoke are more likely to suffer Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, asthma and cardiac disease. Second-hand smoke kills more than 300 Ontario residents every year.

"We know that this is harmful to children— one hour of second-hand smoke in a car is the same as giving kids an entire pack of cigarettes," said Premier Dalton McGuinty in a Wednesday news release announcing the proposed law. "We need to do everything we can to keep our children safe and healthy."

Frankly, we find it impossible to comprehend how an adult could expose any child to second-hand smoke. It's about as abusive an act as an alcoholic parent feeding a youngster liquor.

With the present and future health of Ontario children at stake, we hope the punishment for breaking this law will be substantial.

The deterrent of a hefty fine and possible jail time for repeat offenders will be needed if it is to have any real impact.

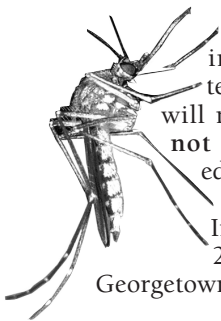
There are some who believe government should not be in the business of legislating common sense.

However, there are also times— remember seatbelts?— when the failure by some members of society to exercise common sense leaves our elected officials feeling obliged to intervene in the interest of public health and safety.

This is one of those times.

## 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 Unsigned letters will not be published.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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The Independent & Free Press is published every Wednesday and Friday at 280 Guelph St., Unit 29, Georgetown Ont., L7G 4B1. It is one of several newspapers published by Metroland Media Group Ltd.

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Price: Store copies 50¢ each; Subscriptions \$26 per year by carrier; \$92.50 per year by mail in Canada; \$130 per year in all other countries. Plus G.S.T.

Second Class Mail Registration Number 6869. The Independent & Free Press is a member of The Canadian Community Newspaper Association and The Ontario Community Newspaper Association.



Steve Nease

Ontario will ban smoking in cars carrying children...



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Who is cancelling school buses and why?

Dear editor,

This past Monday the school buses were cancelled. No one can understand why as the road conditions were wet and the forecasted temperature was 10C.

Who makes this decision? Is it the transportation company or the school board? Is someone "pulling the safety card"?

Luckily I am able and willing to drive my teenaged high school chil-

dren to school but I hear comments like "there is no point, there won't be any classes" and "the teachers don't take classes as they won't teach the same lesson twice".

Monday this turned out to be true. My daughter informed me that approximately 20 students were in school that day. To make matters worse, she was told to go to the library as the staff were having a meeting.

I am told that roughly half the students do not take buses. That would be around 725 students who did not go to school even though I am quite sure these kids were able to go.

My question is, if the parents adopted the same attitude that I did, and made sure that their kids went to school anyway, would the teachers have taught the class? Should the teachers teach our kids when they turn up? Should the kids who do turn up get extra credit for making the effort?

Wouldn't an incentive be that if the non-bused kids did not turn up for school, they would have to do a make-up class in their lunch hour the next day?

The high school curriculum can be especially tough for some students. For those students with high marks I am sure one more day at home will not make a lot of difference to them. For those students with average marks— it could make all the difference.

Who is really paying for all these days off? Where does the money go that is saved from not running all these buses?

I have no problem with being "safe", but I have a huge problem with the attitude "buses are cancelled— let's have another day off".

Sharon Foster,  
Georgetown

### Africentric school proposal is not a bad thing

Dear editor,

Why has there been such a strong reaction to the Toronto District School Board's decision to create a school with an Africentric focus?

Education never will be a one-size-fits-all experience and the Toronto board has long-demonstrated its progressive approach to alternative programming for students. It has 23 secondary and 16 elementary alternative schools, including the First Nations School of Toronto, and the Triangle Program, which provides a safe environment for students who identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

Each alternative school offers a unique learning environment, and each was established in response to student needs. When these alternative schools were proposed, we didn't have crowds showing up to

protest because their children didn't need such schools. We didn't have newspaper editors demanding changes to the Education Act to block such efforts. If it can be shown that a school with an Africentric approach engages students who might otherwise have dropped out, would anyone think this was a bad thing? The school will be open to all students who are interested in attending. In what way does this sound like "segregation," as some have suggested?

For those students who might achieve academic success in a school with an Africentric focus, I applaud the board's decision. It's just one step in addressing the high drop-out rate— there are too many young people on the streets, with few job prospects and little hope for the future.

Judy Scannell, Georgetown