

OPINION

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Long overdue

The provincial government last week introduced the Provincial Animal Welfare Act but our enthusiasm for these changes to animal welfare legislation is muted by the fact the changes were so long overdue.

That these were the most significant changes to animal welfare legislation in this province since legislation was first passed might be impressive— if it wasn't for the fact animal abuse laws were first passed in 1919!

It has been nearly 90 years since a provincial government has given animal abuse legislation more than a passing glance, and while the new changes are certainly welcome, we can't help but wonder why it took so long.

Under the proposed legislation animal abusers could be hit with jail time, bans on owning pets and fines up to \$60,000— all positive steps forward. Veterinarians will also be required to report suspected abuse or neglect.

Under the proposed new law, animal protection officials will no longer have to prove intent in cases of cruelty but only evidence of ownership and that the animal was mistreated. Inspectors with the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) will also be allowed to inspect non-residential premises where animals are kept for entertainment, exhibition, boarding, sale or hire— including pet shops, circuses and public and private zoos.

The OSPCA could also seek custody of seized animals while the courts deal with their owner— a marked change from the current law where a person charged with abuse simply can retain care of the animals by cleaning up the conditions and paying any bills owed to the OSPCA for interim care.

These changes are a step forward in protecting Ontario's animals and punishing those who abuse them. It is just disappointing that it took so long.

Almost as disappointing as reading the OSPCA's most current news release from last week— about charges pending against a suspected puppy mill operator in Bancroft in which 166 small breed dogs were seized.

What do you think?

Below are the results of our most recent online poll. For the current poll go to www.independentfreepress.com

As of April 7 Halton residents will have to use the new GreenCart disposal system to get rid of food waste. How do you feel about the GreenCart system?

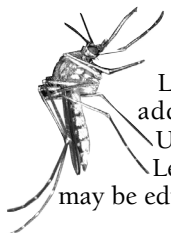
It's great for the environment and I will be happy to use it (60%)

I understand the need for it but I'm not happy about using it (21%)

I will not use my GreenCart (19%)

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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Mail or drop off:

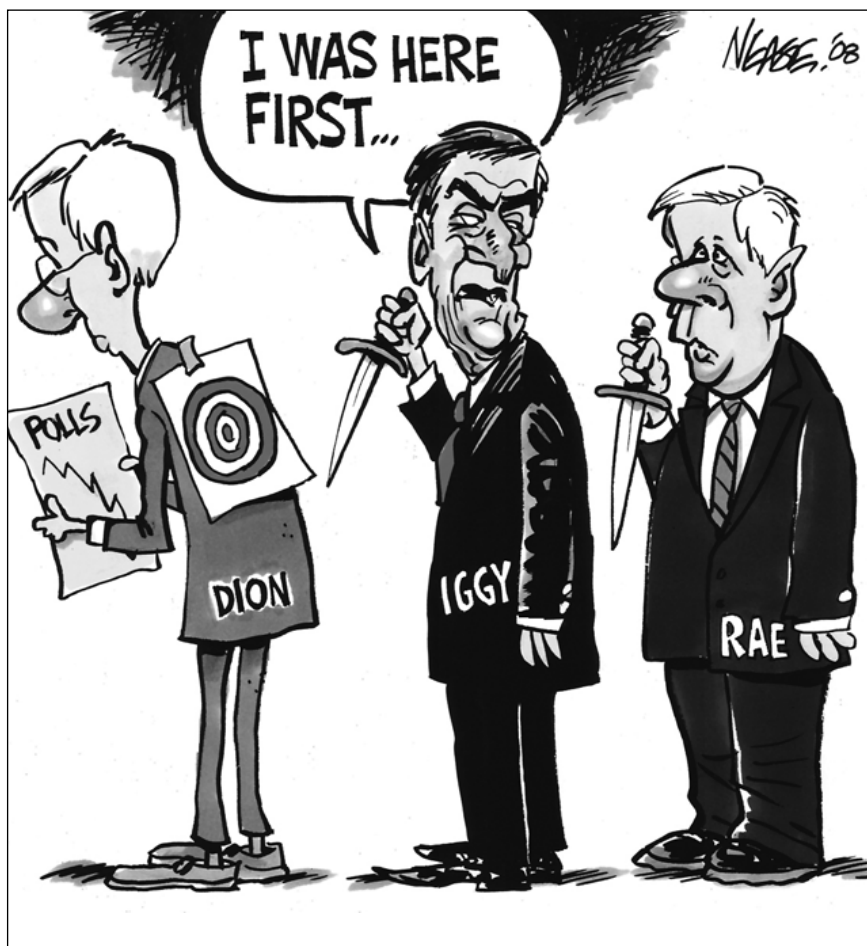
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Teen upset about Earth Hour participation

Dear editor,

On March 29, I participated in the global event: Earth Hour. I sat in the living room with my family surrounded by candlelight and looked out the window at surrounding houses.

To my surprise, they all participated as well. Then however, I went into my front yard and to my amazement, over HALF my street had their lights on! I could also see the water

Why was water tower lit?

Dear editor,

Our home is situated such that our back yard faces northeast towards the main commercial area of Guelph Street. The elevated view provides a very good panorama of the area.

During Earth Hour our family turned off the lights and headed out to our backyard deck to see just how dark it was during the event. While the skies were generally darker and lights from many homes were definitely turned off, we were shocked to see the Region of Halton water tower in all its well-lit glory! With many lights turned off in the area, the tower was particularly noticeable.

There is no question that Earth Hour was symbolic as mentioned in your editorial on April 2. Our question is how much of the 9.4 per cent drop in electrical consumption came from the Town of Halton Hills? Unfortunately, the well-lit water tower, symbolically, contributed little.

Brian LeVoguer, Georgetown

tower from my house and it was lit up as well, along with the rest of our fine establishments.

It was only an hour, people. Was it that difficult for you to turn off your lights?

Centennial Middle School had their lights on, for crying out loud.

Also, to the people who said, "I didn't know", you have no excuse because it was all over the TV, radio and in the newspapers. I'm only 15 and I heard about this event, so sure-

What good did Earth Hour really accomplish?

Dear editor,

I read with interest your editorial in *The Independent & Free Press* (April 2), but what good did Earth Hour do?

As I understand it, the purpose was to make people aware of the effect of air pollution on our climate, not to save power. If people are not aware of this by now, then they must have been living in a cave for the last 20 years.

Now that we are all "aware" of the effects of pollution, does that mean people will stop throwing their

Good Samaritan thanked for helping out in snowstorm

Dear editor,

During the last heavy snowfall, I had the unfortunate luck of my car getting stuck in my driveway.

I was already in a rush to get to work on time, and the last thing I needed was to spend 10 minutes pushing and shoveling. Lucky for me, a young man happened to be driving by and noticed my predicament.

Not only did this young man make

ly a middle-aged homeowner would have heard about it too.

"Well," you say, "it won't change anything if I don't turn out my lights." Actually, if a global event was created... I'm pretty sure that means that it does matter.

Thank you to the people who did participate in this event and to the people who didn't, thank you, you selfish, energy-wasting, house-dwellers.

Brianne Shirt, Georgetown

garbage down on the ground, causing a huge amount of litter? Just look around the area near the mall, the litter is disgusting.

Does it mean that drivers will now drive slower using less gas and producing less pollution? Don't hold your breath on that one!

If people don't care about pollution we can see, (i.e., garbage) then how do we expect them to care about pollution, (i.e., greenhouse gases) that we can't?

Terry Brown, Georgetown

sure I could get down the driveway, but he also used my snow brush to wipe all the snow off of my rear window.

So my sincerest thanks to Matt Hiltz of Georgetown for lending a helping hand. This type of behaviour is becoming more and more common in our wonderful little town.

M.Z. Zelek, Georgetown