

OPINION

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A true tragedy

The 2007 crash that claimed the lives of Rockwood couple Andrew and Henrietta Miller, aged 66 and 65 respectively, was tragic in so many ways.

It was tragic that the couple, whose car was stopped at a level railway crossing, were pushed into the path of an oncoming GO train after drunk driver Ingram Rahim Bakhsh plowed into the rear of the Millers' car.

It was tragic that, at the time of the crash, Bakhsh shouldn't have been drinking or driving in accordance with release conditions for prior drinking and driving charges still before the courts. In fact, Bakhsh had already been involved in three such incidents in Peel in 2006. He pleaded guilty to two of them last week, with the third set of charges stayed. In addition, the court heard that Bakhsh had been charged and convicted of two incidents of drunk driving in the U.S. in 2000 and 2001.

It was tragic that Henrietta Miller volunteered weekly at Maplehurst—the very facility where Bakhsh has been in custody since the crash and that the Rockwood couple were Alcoholics Anonymous sponsors who helped people, not unlike Bakhsh, with their drinking problems.

It was tragic to hear the Millers' daughter describe how her family's life had been turned upside down since the crash.

But perhaps what was most tragic was to hear Crown attorney Brian O'Marra state afterward how the case has "lifted the bar for this type of offence" and that Bakhsh fit the description of "worst offender, worst offence."

With Bakhsh already having served more than a year—and getting various amounts of credit for it—he has only five years and two months left to serve.

That is the real tragic aspect of this case—that a person whose record of drinking and driving spanned nearly a decade and whose utter disregard for the well-being of others led to the death of two innocent people. That a Crown attorney considers a Justice's penalty of seven and a half years a "raising of the bar" is, in itself, tragic.

It is also tragic that such lenient—yes, lenient—sentences will continue to be the norm until lawmakers take a cold hard look at current penalties and effect change that results in penalties which truly fit the crime.

What do you think?

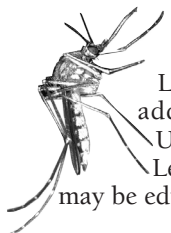
Below are the results of our most recent online poll. For the current poll go to www.independentfreepress.com

A 'habitual drunk driver', who was awaiting trial on two previous drunk driving incidents, was sentenced last week to 7 1/2 years in prison after being convicted of impaired driving in an accident that killed an elderly Rockwood couple. What do you think was an appropriate sentence?

- Less than 7 1/2 years (0%)
- 7 1/2 years was appropriate (4%)
 - 10-15 years (20%)
 - 15-20 years (32%)
- Life imprisonment (44%)

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:

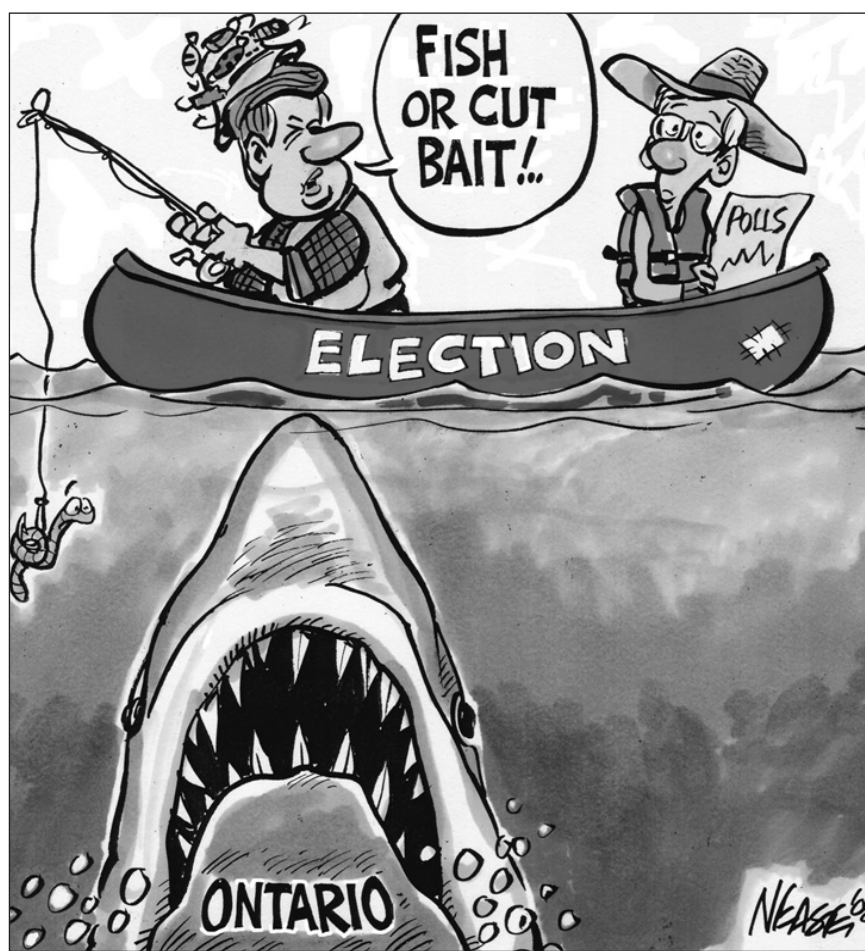
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Steve Nease



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Truck traffic should be prohibited on Maple Ave.

Dear editor,
Now that the Maple Avenue reconstruction and re-surfacing is almost complete, the pending change of jurisdiction of this roadway from the Region to the Town of Halton Hills is also about to happen.

It would seem logical to me that once Town council has the authority to mandate a change in traffic access on Maple Ave., truck traffic on this brand new surface should be prohibited. If this were accomplished, it

would also seem logical to me, that the Fourth Line should be rehabilitated from 17 Sideroad to Steeles Avenue and become a preferred north/south truck route.

This would also offer trucks an alternative to Maple Ave.'s east/west route, using Five or 10 Sideroads, assuming rehab projects on these routes from the Fourth Line to Trafalgar would also occur.

While Trafalgar Road is scheduled to be widened in the near future, I

suggest that offering an alternative north/south truck route such as the Fourth Line, would be much less invasive of the current landowners than widening Trafalgar. Then Trafalgar Rd. could, with minor upgrades, handle the anticipated volume of commuter traffic for the foreseeable future.

Rob Allison, Georgetown

Be responsible and keep cats indoors

Dear editor,
We are writing to express our concern about the safety and protection about people's pets, especially cats. Our message: If you have a cat, please have it spayed or neutered, micro-chipped, and please keep it indoors.

On an evening walk recently, we came across a kitten on the street. This lost kitten was extremely hungry and had been sprayed by a skunk. No one in the area seemed to know where this cat lived, so we took the cat back to my house, to care for it like any good-hearted person would.

I would have loved to keep this kitten, though I knew I could not as I already have three adopted cats to care for. After taking the cat to the veterinarian, we found out it was NOT micro-chipped, thus, we had no way of knowing who this cat belonged to. Flyers were put up in the area as well as phone calls to the local veterinarians to see if anyone reported a lost kitten. I

also contacted three local "no-kill" animal shelters to see if they could care for this kitten until she was adopted. All three shelters flatly told me that they, "are full and are no longer accepting any cats". I could not believe this.

Now this story fortunately has a happy ending. The owner contacted us three days later after a neighbour saw the flyer, and the kitten was reunited with her family.

This is our message. There are too many unwanted, lost, or abandoned cats in the area. Every pet cat should be spayed or neutered, micro-chipped (it only costs about \$75 and lasts a lifetime) and cats should be kept indoors, and not let out to run wild. These simple suggestions will ensure your cat's safety. If you are a pet owner, be responsible and do your part.

Christie Hallett and Sandra Domski, Georgetown

Thanks for the donations

Dear editor,
What an incredibly generous community we live in, with more than 2,000 children's books donated to our recent book donation.

The students who received the books were thrilled, as they got to choose their own book to take home, whether it was a pirate pop-up book, or a Nancy Drew novel. Our hope in this endeavour is that all children should be given the opportunity to cherish a book of their own, and develop a lifelong love for reading.

Thanks also goes to Jane Diamanti at the Halton Hills Public Library for her support and the use of the library foyer, *The Independent & Free Press* for the publicity, Jim Van Buskirk for his guidance, and the students and staff involved.

After the success of this event, we're hoping it'll turn into an annual event, and look forward to your future support.

Emily Dobson
Georgetown District High School's
Social Justice League

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