



COMMENT

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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Enough is enough -- let's get tough on drunk drivers

The festive season is long over and we're well into 1998.

The stepped-up police spot checks aimed at deterring drinking and driving and educating the public about the crime's disastrous potential have simmered down.

Still, the problem continues 365 days a year.

Issue after issue of The Champion, which reports on events in a modest-sized town of only about 35,000 people, contains news of impaired driving charges.

Many of them result from single-vehicle accidents that easily could have involved other cars or pedestrians and the injury of innocent people.

Drunk driving continues. Accidents continue. Deaths continue.

The suspects are of all ages and from different walks of life.

We agree with Ontario Solicitor General Bob Runciman, who recently said that a year in jail for motorists convicted of impaired driving for the first time may be the answer to reducing the problem.

And, the solicitor general said, the time in jail would progress with the number of convictions.

Mr. Runciman was responding to an increased number of impaired drivers caught in the Greater Toronto Area.

Over an eight-day period recently, 146 drivers were charged with alcohol-related offences across the province — 26 per cent more than the year prior during the same period.

Mr. Runciman said it and he said it well. Forcing offenders to serve time may be the only way some will get the message.

He noted part of the problem now is that when jail sentences are handed out, many of those convicted get to serve their time on weekends.

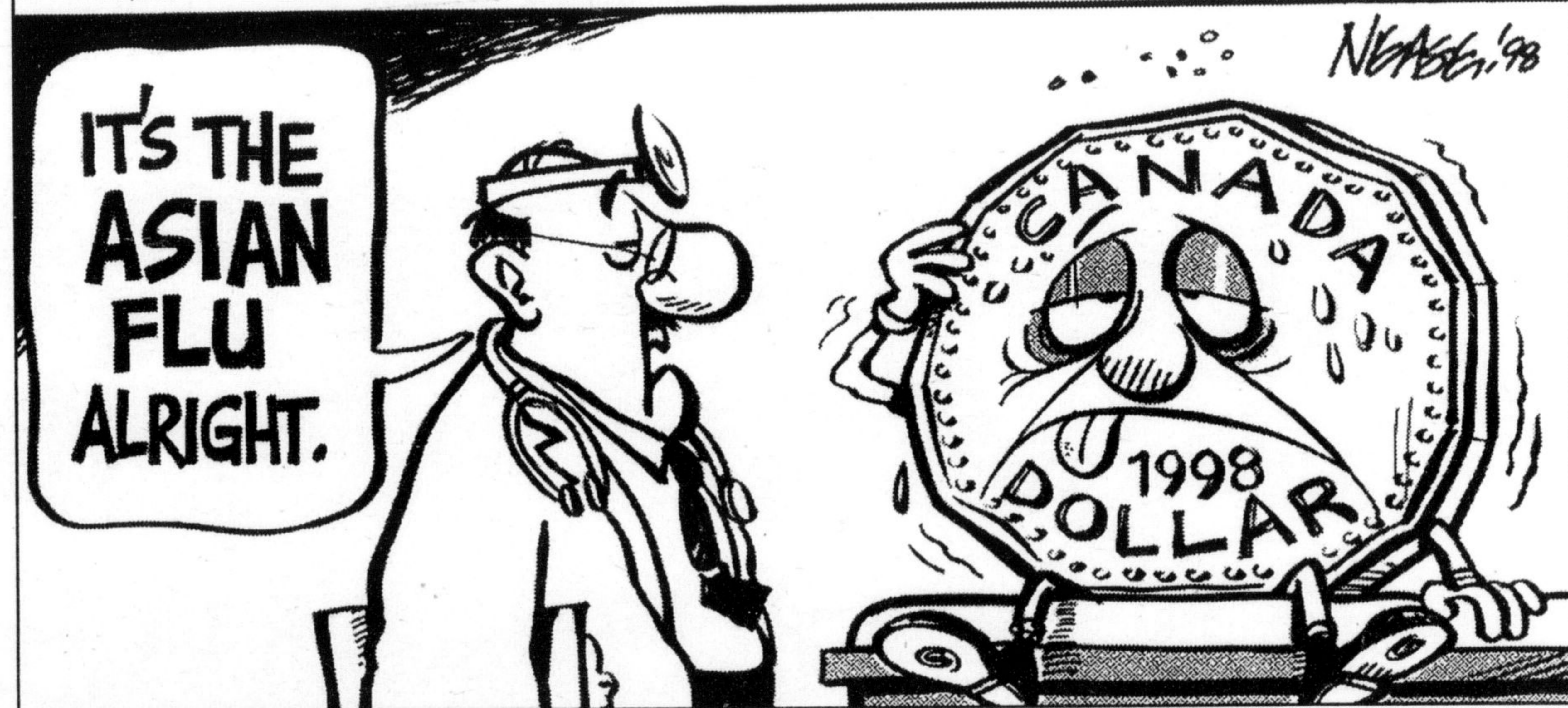
Echoing his comments, we've got to look at the protection of society and curbing measures such as allowing drunk drivers to serve time when it's convenient for them.

A year in jail for first-time offenders would mirror some of the drunk-driving laws now in Europe. Penalties for Canadians caught for the first time now start at a \$350 fine and a one-year licence suspension.

In June, the Ontario legislature passed tough drunk-driving legislation that slapped a lifetime licence ban on repeat impaired drivers.

Let's go one step further and follow Mr. Runciman's suggestion. Let's do whatever it takes to stop the senseless injuries, deaths and heartache that this crime creates -- courtesy of irresponsible drinkers -- every year.

Karen Smith



OUR READERS WRITE

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

Homemaking services a big priority, says MPP Cam Jackson

Dear Editor:

This letter is regarding homemaking services. Through 10 years as an opposition MPP, I constantly alerted past governments to the fact that Halton was not receiving its fair share of health care dollars, particularly for home care.

These services cover a range of programs, from visiting nurses to housekeeping, which allow frail seniors, disabled individuals and those recovering from surgery to live independently at home.

Since the last election, Halton has finally been getting its fair share. Funding for community-based, long-term care services has been increased by \$170 million. We made sure this money is going into previously underfunded areas like Halton.

About \$3.5 million of this new money is being spent in Halton to allow our Community Care Access Centre, Halton Region Adult Day Services, Tele-Touch, VON and Meals on Wheels (among others) to expand their programs.

Clearly our government sees these as valued services. That context is important to people who saw the Dec. 31 article on service levels. My comments about vacuuming services came in response to a question from Dr. Tony Pracovics, who had previously admitted to the media that he was keeping patients in hospital longer only because of a waiting list for housekeeping services.

At that time there was no waiting list for nursing services, Meals on Wheels or assistance with bathing for his patients. With these services in place, a delay in housekeeping

should not be the issue that determines if a patient can be discharged from our hospitals, which is experiencing its own growth pressures.

Homemaking services are essential to maintaining the quality of life for thousands of frail seniors and disabled individuals across Ontario and it was never my intention to suggest otherwise. The province currently spends \$526 million on nursing care and therapy at home, \$327 million on homemaking and \$338 million on community support services, for a total of \$1.2 billion.

The greatest threat to homemaking services is that without regular re-evaluations, many clients, particularly those who have recovered from surgery, continue to receive services after they are no longer necessary. Our government recognizes this problem and is working with our new Community Care Access centres to fix it.

Increased demand for home care is an important reason why our government is moving to modernize and restructure Ontario's health care system. One of our goals is to find new efficiencies elsewhere in the system. I have been approached by 10 centres in other regions to undertake a management review of increased demand and projected deficits and I have been working closely with them. The Halton centre has made no such request to me, either as the minister or as the local MPP.

In coming days, I look forward to having an opportunity to discuss its policy decisions and its budget to ensure that Halton citizens receive the appropriate level of health services they need, when they need it and for as long as they need it.

Cam Jackson, MPP
Burlington South

Pud

by Steve Nease

