



# COMMENT

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

## New youth crime act is tough enough now

We agree with Halton MP Julian Reed that the proposed Youth Criminal Justice Act -- recently tabled by the federal government -- is as tough as it has to be.

Contrary to Halton North MPP Ted Chudleigh's comments that the current Young Offenders Act needs a complete overhaul, we believe it needed some adjusting, and that's what's been done.

The required changes have become necessary as we see more serious violent acts being committed by people at younger ages.

Should it pass, the new legislation would empower youth courts to impose adult sentences on violent offenders as young as 14. Previously, only 16 and 17-year-old offenders could receive adult sentences.

Serving adult time at age 14 is a strong measure for an obviously mixed-up teenager, but one we feel is justified.

Thus, we believe Mr. Chudleigh's call for adults sentences for violent offenders as young as 12 years is just too extreme -- at least for now.

Karen Smith



## OUR READERS WRITE

### Gevaert deserves support: reader

Dear Editor:

I read with interest the two articles in the Friday, Apr. 2 issue of your newspaper criticizing Lieven Gevaert's attendance record at Council meetings.

Reporter Irene Gentle's write-up starts off by saying that Ward 3 residents might feel neglected by his absence, but fails to provide any evidence to support that suggestion.

As a long-time resident of Ward 3, I feel it is incumbent to respond. As a resident and taxpayer of the Town of Milton, other than Barry Lee I would much rather have Mr. Gevaert representing by interests part-time than any of the other

councillors full-time. I know that he's highly intelligent and dedicated to any responsibility that he assumes.

Also the fact that his talents are recognized internationally by acting as a consultant in Israel is a further indication of his talents. I was sorry to learn from your paper that he had to forego a further consulting job, just because of the conflict with regular attendance at council meetings.

All of Milton is most fortunate to have a person of his calibre on council and he deserves our support.

Richard Hall  
Twiss Road

### Government spin doctors using technology to oppose Merchant Seamen's compensation claim

Dear Editor:

The bureaucrats of Veterans Affairs are engaged in a letter writing campaign using Canadian newspapers and the Internet to challenge the demands of Canada's Merchant Seamen for compensation in lieu of veterans benefits denied to them after the Second World.

Their letters have gone out over the signature of a Bob Gardham, director of the communications division. Mr. Gardham refers Canadians to the Veterans Affairs website.

Herein lies a problem. A searcher will find plenty of information extolling the virtues of Veterans Affairs, but absolutely no mention of the most important document in the Merchant Seamen saga. That is, a statement by the Minister of Transport in 1945, to the effect that the government withheld these benefits because the Seamen would be needed to man a Mercantile

fleet for which Canada had plans after the Second World War.

The Veterans Affairs website makes no mention either of a December 9, 1949 statement by Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent, to the effect that the government will not subsidize the Canadian Merchant fleet.

Sometime between, Transport Minister Lionel Chevrier's statement of 1945 — and the Prime Minister's declaration of 1949 — Canada found it could not compete with foreign ships. It had become clear. There would be no Canadian Mercantile Marine, but the government did not follow up by recognizing veteran status for the Second World War Merchant Seamen, who had survived the North Atlantic and Murmansk runs.

Instead, the Veterans Affairs website is straight motherhood, regurgitating pap about the few benefits that did emerge. The first was in 1962 with an allowance for

Merchant Mariners who were among the homeless. The second was in 1992 when pensions became available, but only if the death or injury occurred in direct action with the enemy. It occurs to me, however, that there is something scary here. Are we seeing the spin doctors making use of technology by referring Canadians to the government website?

Perhaps acceptable, but only if the Veterans Affairs home pages on Merchant Seamen tell the whole story. If, however, the media campaign of the VAC bureaucrats blatantly invites the public to another barrage of its propaganda regarding the current Merchant Seamen controversy, veterans organizations will have to fight fire with fire. We, too, have websites.

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### Pud

by Steve Nease

