

COMMENT

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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It's simple. If you're drinking, don't drive

With the holidays fast approaching and festive celebrations reaching their peak, we want to remind motorists of the dangers of drinking and then getting behind the wheel. Mixing alcohol and driving is not only senseless, avoidable and irresponsible, it's illegal.

Police are out in full force to drive home that message as the Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere (RIDE) campaign has been stepped up.

Last year, during the OPP's five-week holiday RIDE initiative, a total of 456,149 vehicles were stopped at roadside checkpoints across the province, including Milton. As many as 890 12-hour suspensions were issued and 460 persons were charged with criminal code alcohol-related charges. More than 400 90-day licence suspensions were also issued.

In other words, for every 338 drivers stopped at a RIDE checkpoint, one driver was either charged with an impaired driving-related offence or was issued a 12-hour licence suspension.

During the same period, the OPP investigated 42 fatal collisions in which 46 people were killed. More than 30 per cent of the collisions were alcohol-related. And those are only the OPP figures. They don't include statistics from Halton Regional Police.

It's unbelievable, but motorists are still drinking and driving. Some people just don't get it. Are you one of those people?

OUR READERS WRITE

Teachers have been too easy a target for the Ontario government, stresses reader

Dear Editor:

This letter is in response to your editorial 'Retirement gratuities bringing big pressure' that appeared in the November 27 Champion.

The Halton District School Board isn't the only board to find itself in a fiscal crisis.

Newspaper headlines across the province recently announced that school boards everywhere are in a fiscal crisis.

Some of those headlines include 'Board still waiting for provincial cash' (Brampton Guardian), 'Money woes worry board' (Sudbury Star), and 'Public school board braces for \$880,000 deficit'

(Simcoe Reformer).

Some boards have reported inadequate funds for gratuities, others are grappling with energy and transportation cost increases, while still others can't meet wage increases or benefits.

It's quite apparent that the Ontario government has reduced its level of support dramatically for public education.

It has turned its back on the system. Ontario's teachers have been taking hits for years.

Remember when Bob Rae gouged the teachers' wages and froze pay scale increases through the Social Contract?

Many of these teachers also went without a pay increase for up to 10 years. When they received an increase, it was often meagre at best.

Recently, teachers were told that they have to pay for a perpetual recertification program. What's next — gratuities, pay, and benefit cuts? Teachers make too easy a fall guy for the down-sizing agenda of the Tories.

I urge readers to look beyond Halton and take a glimpse at just how widespread the underfunding crisis in public education really is.

Tom Koperwas
Windsor

We could really live without the slippery wet stuff

At this time of year, we are accustomed to seeing snow plows, kids running around in snow suits and icicles hanging from the roof top.

But unfortunately (or fortunately, if you think the way I do), we have yet to see the familiar signs of winter.

Maybe this year Christmas will be colourless. We can always pray.

But for those of us who actually like the cold weather, or rather participating in various activities derived from cold weather, this is a rather gloomy time of year.

The people who operate Kelso are asking for just one day or night (at the very least) of cold weather in order to make artificial snow. Temperatures must hit -5 degrees Celsius before this can be done. So far, our unusually-warm temperatures have barely given in.

But maybe it will for Christmas break, and the

slopes will be filled with eager snow enthusiasts.

Even though I despise snow and would rather live somewhere with palm trees swaying in the gulf breeze, I know how much fun it is to make a snowman, snow angels and take walks through the glistening snow on a windless day or night.

But that's hardly good reason to wish for flakes.

We do have benefits from the white stuff. It's a way for us to keep in shape when shoveling driveways. It's a time to catch pneumonia when rolling around on the ground, or stepping into a giant puddle and walking around with soaked pants for the rest of the day.

And don't forget scraping ice off the car. Now that's the best part of winter. Oh, how I love to stand outside in the freezing cold, my teeth chattering, my hands numb, and rid my car of the giant mountain of snow that accumulated over



Random thoughts

with FANNIE SUNSHINE

the course of the day. Nothing brightens my day more.

Since this will really be my first winter traveling back and forth from Toronto to Milton (although my first day was in February, but snow wasn't a problem at that time), I'm less than anxious to see if the weather will play to my advantage in the morning. I'm not holding my breath.

True, the winter months provide us with some time off from the hot summer days, and true, it's a time to cuddle by the warm fireplace with that special someone. But let's face it — winter is a depressing time of year. The sun rarely shines, the kids can't play in the park and the urge to go outside is practically non-existent.

Now I know there are people out there who actually enjoy this God-awful time of year, like the people who make a living out of plowing snow off the roads and tow truck drivers who can charge an arm and a leg for hauling your vehicle 80 km away when the engine won't start because of the freezing temperatures. And I'm sure people can think of many reasons why we should be grateful we live in a country with ever-changing seasons. But we could always ski on artificial snow. And cuddle by the fire on camping trips.

We can live without the slippery wet stuff.