

# Comment

## The Canadian Champion

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## What will 2005 hold?

Boxing Day's devastating earthquake in southern Asia has all but solidified 2004 as the year of Mother Nature's wrath.

The Boxing Day deep-sea tremor off the coast of Indonesia measuring 9.0 magnitude created a giant tsunami, or tidal wave, so powerful it was responsible for dozens of deaths in Somalia — an incredible 6,000 km west of the quake site.

At last count, about 44,000 had died — just 7,000 less than the entire population of Milton — and more than a million others were affected when gigantic waves came ashore in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Burma, Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh and Maldives.

All in all, 2004 has been a year of natural catastrophes.

Prior to Boxing Day's devastation, the second half of the year saw a string of hurricanes devastate the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico and Florida coastline causing billions of dollars in property damage and several thousand fatalities.

Half a world away, a trio of typhoons hammered Japan, while in the Philippines thousands were killed in more than two weeks of flooding last month.

Ironically, exactly one year before this year's Boxing Day tragedy, a powerful earthquake killed more than 43,000, injured 20,000 more and left some 60,000 homeless in the ancient city of Bam, Iran.

Closer to home this year, residents of Peterborough, Ont. found themselves wading through 200 millimetres of rain in mid-July.

Environmentalists suggest a marked increase in the frequency and intensity of violent global weather coincides with continued man-made global warming.

Whether or not global warming can be scientifically linked to trends in weather patterns, this year's devastation as a result of natural disasters leaves many wondering, what next?

In addition to the loss of life and billions of dollars in property damage, these powerful storms leave some of the world's most impoverished people without shelter, electricity, clean water and food. In many cases the rebuilding of these weather-ravaged countries will take years.

We only hope 2005 comes in like a lamb — and remains that way.

## Our Readers Write

### Thanks to everyone who helped reduce drinking and driving locally this past year

Dear Editor:

On behalf of the board members of MADD's Halton/Peel chapter, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone concerned for their ongoing support throughout the past year.

With the help of our dedicated volunteers, emergency services, elected members of all three levels of government and individual and corporate sponsors of the community, we've truly been able to make a difference in delivering MADD Canada's message that drinking and

driving is a criminal act that causes needless fatalities and injuries.

It's difficult to place a value on a human life, and if we have saved just one life in Halton and Peel with our public awareness campaigns, we have done our job.

I know that we're contributing to our society by exposing the problem of drinking and driving, and subsequently are affecting long-term behaviour — thus leading to safer roads. This is especially evident when you have students really taking home the message to their

parents after having participated in a MADD presentation at their schools.

But as always, there's still more work to be done.

Once again, thanks for all your support, because without you we wouldn't have been able to make such a big impact in the community this year. Here's wishing you and your families all the best for a safe holiday season and prosperous new year.

Jeff Gareau, president  
MADD Halton/Peel chapter

E-mail all your letters to the editor to [miltone@haltonsearch.com](mailto:miltone@haltonsearch.com).

## Good luck with all of your New Year's resolutions

Happy New Year, Milton!

Okay, so I'm jumping the gun a few hours — but this time of year always gets me excited, even more so than Christmas.

I — like millions across the country, and beyond — see January 1 as a golden opportunity to start bettering myself. Sure there's no logical purpose for choosing the new year to make resolutions as opposed to any other time. A wise man once said that every passing moment is another chance to turn it all around.

But there's just something about the seemingly blank slate of a new year that creates a newfound sense of purpose in many of us, and pushes us toward self-improvement.

Unlike many people, however, I won't be limiting myself to any one resolution in 2005. After all, my shortcomings certainly aren't restricted to any one area, so why should my resolutions.

And my theory is that if you, make a bunch of

resolutions — some big, some not so big — you're bound to keep at least one or two...and that's success.

By contrast, the pressure of living up to just one resolution is often too great for most people and often leads to failure. Of course overcoming a longtime addiction like smoking or drinking can take every bit of one's energy and will-power — and should probably be attempted without any distractions — but fortunately I'm not saddled with such a challenge.

Instead, I'll be joining the millions of others who are committed to hitting the gym more often over the next 12 months. The potential pitfall to this resolution is if you're not willing to make a real change to your existing routine, which in my case means less television — no small sacrifice, I'll tell you.

Those who are truly flexible (figuratively, not physically) and ready to alter their schedules, in



Up  
front

with STEVE LeBLANC

my opinion, are the ones most likely to make good on a resolution like getting in shape.

I suppose eating healthier should go hand-in-hand with this, and I will at least give that a try as well. But sinful food will be darn near impossible to give up for yours truly, and it's bound to be even harder now that we're getting a Quizno's here. Ever tried their Philly cheese steak subs? —

friggin' delicious.

Of course not all resolutions have to be difficult. One thing I plan to do in 2005 is learn how to skate again — something that should be fun, and potentially amusing. My motivation comes from the fact that I'm set to become a godfather in a couple of months and hope to introduce the young lad to Canada's favourite pastime once he's old enough to hit the ice. That'll be a little easier to do if I'm actually able to get around on the blades again.

This may not exactly seem monumental, but if it's constructive and makes me feel better about myself it's progress. Yes, major improvements are admirable, but little changes can go a long way as well toward becoming a better person.

So once all of tonight and tomorrow morning's reveling has subsided, here's hoping we all make a concerted effort to bettering ourselves in 2005. Good luck, Milton.