

# OPINION

## Victims being re-victimized

Throwing money at a problem to make it go away is a favourite tactic of governments. However, we're hoping the McGuinty Liberals aren't using this strategy to clean up the mess that has become the Ontario Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

Ontario Ombudsman André Marin last week unveiled his scathing report on the board, calling it a "colossal failure" that has embraced a "rule-obsessed, paper-shuffling culture." Victims of crime have been treated with "bureaucratic indifference and suspicion."

Established in 1971 by the provincial government in an effort to help provide financial compensation to victims of violent crime, Marin has found the board has become awash in so much red tape that half of the applicants eventually give up their claims out of frustration.

The board takes an average of three years to process applications while similar boards in Quebec and British Columbia take only two and three months respectively. Marin found that forms from victims have been returned for such mundane reasons as forgetting to dot an "i" in a name. By this October there will be a backlog of more than 17,500 cases.

Unbelievable.

Marin puts the blame solely on Queen's Park, saying the board is a \$40-million operation being run on a \$20-million budget.

Attorney-General Michael Bryant was quick to vow immediate action on Marin's report and ponied up nearly \$21 million within two days of the report's release. He also appointed Ontario Chief Justice Roy McMurtry to make recommendations on how to revamp the board.

However, it should be noted that Bryant's ministry was fully aware of the board's problems as a 2005 e-mail from his ministry said: "The ministry may be vulnerable to criticism... should what we have learned about the (board's) current status and practices get out."

Well, the government's "dirty little secret" (as Marin described it) is out.

We're hoping this problem doesn't simply get put on the back-burner now that some money has been thrown its way. The provincial government must start helping victims of crime instead of victimizing them again.



## Readers Write

Send your letters to [miltone@haltonsearch.com](mailto:miltone@haltonsearch.com) or drop them off at 875 Main St. E.

### Serving Ward 2 was a privilege

DEAR EDITOR:

I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks to you, the voters of Ward 2, for your encouragement, support and votes in the past two municipal elections.

It was truly a privilege to represent and serve you as town councillor.

As you know, I recently resigned from town council because of my recent appointment as Justice of the

Peace by the Attorney General of Ontario.

I'm deeply humbled and honoured by this new appointment, and I embrace this new challenge with much excitement and enthusiasm.

Thank you, Milton, for the special memories of service on town council.

**JUSTICE MARK CURTIS**  
FORMER WARD 2 COUNCILLOR

## Upfront

### It could have been worse — make that a whole lot worse

Sometimes you've just got to look on the bright side of things.

I'll admit I wasn't quite able, or willing, to do that early last week when — having just begun vacation — I first learned of the fire at our Champion's 875 Main St. E. digs.

The idea of having to commute each day to our stop-gap base of operations here at The Oakville Beaver and the possibility of having to retrieve countless phone numbers of sports contacts left me in a rather unpleasant mood.

Throw in the then probable loss of all my back issues and a ton of personal effects — the latter of which were mostly, and thankfully, saved (complete with a rather foul smokey smell) — and I was awash in a sea of negativity.

That is until earlier this week, when it dawned on me that the situation could have

been worse — make that a whole lot worse.

Let's start with the fact that if we were an independent paper instead of part of a chain, operations would almost certainly have been put on hold and perhaps even ceased permanently. In many cases, independents just barely have the resources to put out a paper under ideal circumstances, much less this kind of adversity.

With that in mind, I'm feeling fortunate just to be getting a paycheque this week — and more than a little impressed that my co-workers had a paper out on the street just a day after our building went up in flames. I guess you just can't keep a *Champion* down.

And while I can't say this for certain, I'm not sure too many sister papers would have been as accommodating and welcoming as

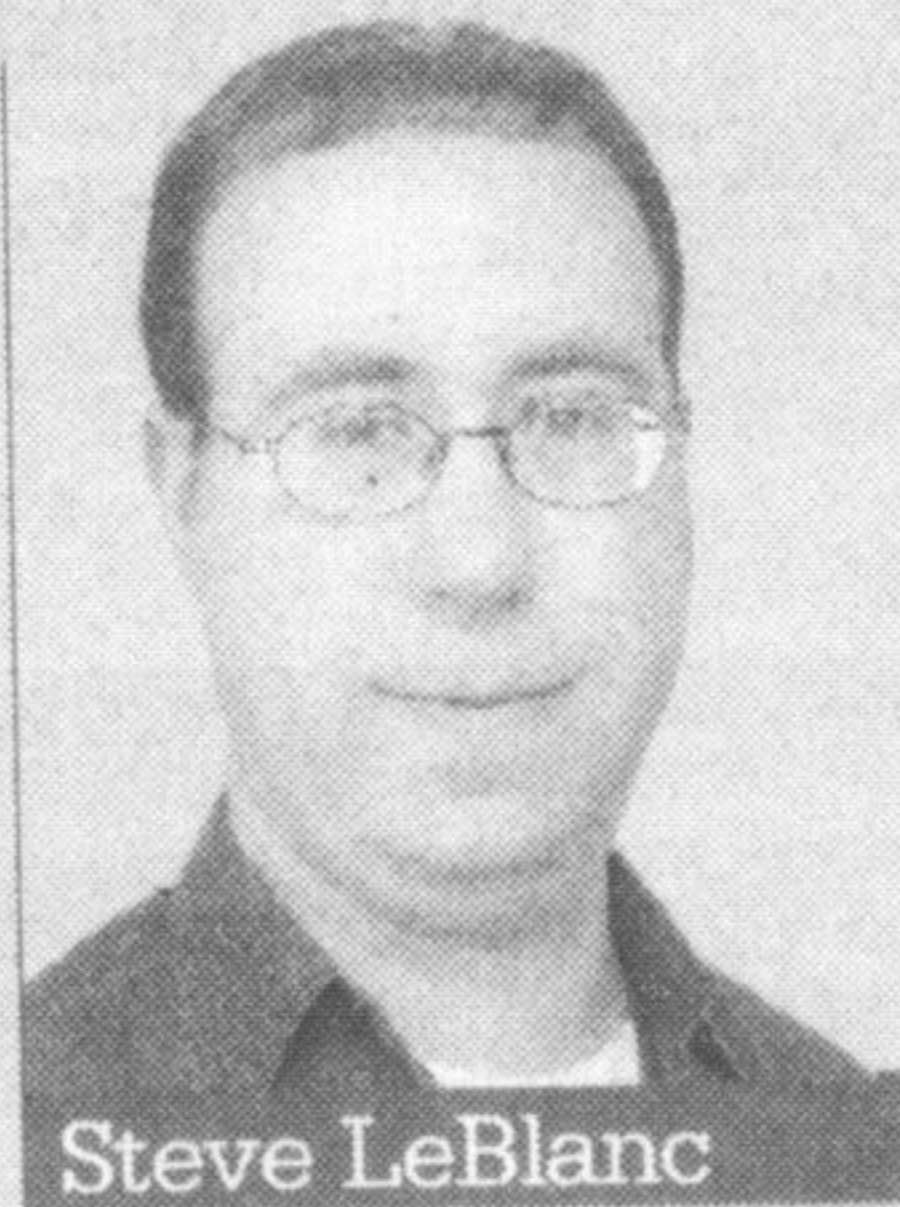
the Beaver has. If the situation was reversed, I question if I would've even been tolerant of an intrusion on my work domain — being someone not comfortable with sharing or any disruption to my weekly routine — much less helpful.

When you add plenty of community concern for our dilemma to the mix, it's hard to be too negative about the situation.

And this Tuesday's *Champion* offered us a tragic reminder that fires can claim an awful lot more

than just property.

That Steeles Avenue blaze was where the real loss came into play. In the grand scheme of things, our *Champion* fire is nothing more than a minor nuisance — and not worth getting hung up about.



Steve LeBlanc

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