

OPINION

Celebrate safely

Take precautions when lighting fireworks over holiday weekend

Fireworks may entertain us like toys, but they should never be treated as such.

While seemingly an all-too-obvious notion, it's one that's occasionally lost on some people — who fail to safeguard themselves when celebrating holidays like Labour Day by lighting up the night sky.

As hard as it is to believe, there's even been reports in the past few years of Toronto youths shooting off fireworks at both rival groups and area residents.

While we're fairly confident Miltonians won't be engaging in such moronic behaviour this weekend, there may be some novice handlers who don't know all the precautions necessary to ensure their fireworks display isn't just enjoyable but safe as well. With that said, here's some tips to keep in mind.

- Appoint a responsible person to be in charge. Only adults who are aware of the hazards and essential safety precautions should handle and discharge fireworks.
- Carefully read and follow the label directions on fireworks packaging.
- Always keep a water hose or pail of water close by when discharging fireworks.
- Discharge fireworks well away from combustible materials like buildings, trees and dry grass.
- Keep onlookers a safe distance away, upwind from the area where fireworks are discharged.
- Light only one firework at a time and only when they are on the ground. Never try to light a firework in your hand or re-light dud fireworks. For dud fireworks, it is best to wait 30 minutes and soak them in a bucket of water. Dispose of them in a metal container.
- Discharge fireworks only if wind conditions do not create a safety hazard.
- Keep sparklers away from children. Sparklers burn extremely hot and can ignite clothing, cause blindness and result in severe burns. As the sparkler wire remains hot for some minutes after burnout, it should be immediately soaked in water to avoid injury.
- If someone gets burned, run cool water over the wound for three to five minutes and seek medical attention, if necessary.

And at the risk of stating the obvious, much like drinking and driving, alcohol consumption and the handling of fireworks certainly don't mix.

Please play safe this weekend, Milton.



ReadersWrite

E-mail your letters to miltoneid@haltonsearch.com.

Lights, turning lanes welcomed

DEAR EDITOR:

This letter is in reply to the letter from A. Wallace in the August 14 *Champion*.

We have lived at the Britannia and Thompson Road corner since 1967 and are very pleased with the new stoplight and turning lanes.

We have seen Britannia Road change from a quiet country road to part of the Toronto rat race.

Cars would come over the hill from

the west and go into a screaming speed mode down the straight-a-way.

In the morning and evening we couldn't get out of our driveway. Accidents at the corner were a regular occurrence.

Now with the lights and the new turning lanes to funnel cars toward town — not to the dead end — the peace is wonderful.

ELEANOR HADFIELD
MILTON

Upfront

There's more to be grateful for than just a day off work

How fitting it is that our town marks each Labour Day weekend with its traditional Steam-Era. After all, it's a holiday steeped in history and a time of year when celebrating the past is certainly appropriate.

While falling well below Christmas, Easter and Thanksgiving on the holiday stature scale, Labour Day provides plenty of cause for both gratitude and celebration as well. That is, unless you long for a return to the 12-hour work day, paltry wages and absence of employee rights that our forefathers suffered through.

Rooted in Civil War-era New York City, Labour Day's birth centres around young Irish immigrant Peter McGuire, who had multiple jobs long before reaching adolescence and like many newcomers found American living and working conditions didn't quite live up to his dreams.

Determined to rectify the latter, McGuire and like-minded activists began championing the call for workers' rights, and after much struggle — to say the very least — the first Labour Day parade was held on September 5, 1882.

Twelve years later, U.S. Congress declared the first Monday of September as a legal holiday, with our own government doing likewise a mere 25 days after that.

While Canada piggybacked on its southern neighbours with regard to Labour Day, we do have our own unique chapter in the holiday's history — with members of seven Ottawa unions taking Sir John A. Macdonald along on their parade in 1872.

The encounter was apparently fruitful, as Canada's first prime minister would later



Steve LeBlanc

"sweep away all such barbarous laws from the statute books" that made unions illegal.

I myself don't have a particularly strong opinion about unions one way or the other.

There's good and bad to be found in them, like so many other things in life. But as someone who really has nothing to complain about when it comes to employee rights and compensation, it's hard to look back and not be grateful to those who paved the way for a fair working environment.

So when you're raising your glass on Monday, be sure to offer a toast to the pioneers for decent wages, reasonable work days and employee benefits.

Remember, most of us have a lot more than just a day off work to be thankful for. Happy Labour Day, Milton!

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