

OPINION

Strap yourself in — no excuses

Failing to buckle up leaves you 38 times more likely to be killed in crash

Trivia question: What year did wearing seatbelts in Ontario become mandatory — a) 1976; b) 1980; or c) 1982?

If you guessed that it was 32 years ago — in 1976 — congratulations! An entire generation of Ontario drivers have grown up knowing it is the law to buckle up when getting behind the wheel of a vehicle.

But amazingly, it's estimated that about 680,000 Ontarians don't wear seatbelts. Apart from risking a \$110 fine and two demerit points upon conviction, those drivers (and their passengers) are putting themselves in unnecessary danger.

Failing to wear your seatbelt while driving makes you about 38 times more likely to be killed in a crash than if you did buckle up.

We often hear of fatal crashes in which the driver or an occupant of a car was "ejected." In most cases those ejected weren't wearing their seatbelts and by becoming a human missile were putting themselves in far greater jeopardy than if they were strapped in.

Seatbelt safety blitzes and child safety seat inspection clinics will be held across the province during the first two weeks of October to remind drivers and passengers to buckle up and make sure children are safely secured.

Local police, fire, emergency medical services, public health units and volunteer organizations are joining forces to spread the word that seatbelts, child safety seats and booster seats save lives.

Booster seats and child safety seats are mandatory for children under age eight who weigh less than 36 kg (80 pounds), and are less than 145 cm (4 feet, 9 inches) tall. Drivers who don't correctly use booster seats or child safety seats for their young passengers also face two demerit points and a \$110 fine.

If you don't regularly wear a seatbelt ask yourself this: What's holding you back?



ReadersWrite

E-mail your letters to editorial@miltoncanadianchampion.com.

Exercise your right and vote Oct. 14

DEAR EDITOR:

A short time ago I was having lunch with some friends and the topic of the federal election came up. I couldn't help but notice their dissatisfaction with the way issues are handled by government officials.

When asked who they would vote for, they replied, "I can't be bothered to vote." Unfortunately, this seems to be the general attitude of many in our society. People should realize that even one vote can make a difference.

The day may come when governments will stop free elections altogether,

saying, "Why bother having an election at all with voter turnout so low?"

With this in mind, think of countries in parts of Africa and Asia where communism rules the land. Even worse are places with the rule of the gun.

Every year people come from places like these to Canada looking for a better life, including freedom of choice — something Canadians too often take for granted.

And remember, if you don't vote, you shouldn't criticize elected officials.

**WAYNE BOUDREAU
MILTON**

Aroundtown

Bid to speed up court process great news, and long overdue

Week after week, month after month, sometimes even year after year... nothing but waiting, tormented by the unknown.

It must be torture for families whose lives have become wrapped up in a court case to wait sometimes years for a resolution. Unfortunately, that's all too often the case.

I'm thinking especially about the victims involved and their loved ones, but also the accused persons and their families — they are, after all, innocent until proven guilty.

Take, for example, the case of a local high school student who was killed in 2006 when she was struck by a vehicle while rollerblading near her rural Milton home.

The accused in the incident has been before the courts for more than two years. I can only imagine the added stress this would place on the family of the young woman.

So needless to say, I was glad to hear a

recent announcement from Attorney General Chris Bentley that Ontario is setting targets to reduce the provincial average of days and court appearances needed to complete a criminal charge by 30 per cent over the next four years through its 'Justice on Target' strategy.

An expert panel has been formed to provide advice on how to move cases through the justice system faster.

It's no surprise that the court system has become increasingly clogged.

In the past 15 years, the length of criminal cases has nearly doubled; in 1992, cases were in the system for an average of 115 days. By last year, the number had jumped to 205 days, states a press release issued by the

Ministry of the Attorney General.

Two hundred and five? If only the cases I've followed had been resolved in 205 days. A quick scan of recent cases covered by the *Champion* show durations ranging from just over a year to three-and-a-half years.

In one case a man who pleaded guilty to child pornography was dealt with in six months, but that doesn't seem to be the norm.

Ironically enough, in the case that took three-and-a-half years, the individual was acquitted. Can you imagine being before the courts for that long before being found not guilty?

Three of the cases I'm currently following

• see I on page A7



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