

Mississauga man jailed in impaired driving death

A Mississauga father of two young children today was given an 18-month jail sentence for the drunk driving death of a Milton taxi driver.

Caleb Harrison, 35, is also prohibited from driving for two years for the impaired driving death of Michael Rayment, 44.

He was also convicted of three counts of impaired driving causing bodily harm for injuries sustained by the taxi's passengers.

In sentencing him, Justice Michael Tulloch told Harrison that he seemed to be "a decent man" with many positives and he was lucky he didn't receive a harsher sentence.

In a tragic twist of fate, Harrison was supposed to be the designated driver that night for his friends.

But he drank and crashed his Mercedes head-on into a taxi with four young men, who chose to be driven home instead of risking driving because they had been drinking.

"Impaired driving is an

epidemic in our society and needs to be denounced," Tulloch told a Brampton court. "The gravity of the offence and the degree of responsibility requires incarceration..."

Tulloch said it was "ironic" and "awfully tragic and sad" that a designated taxi driver died because of impaired driving.

The convicted man was already on bail — and under a court order to not consume alcohol — when he killed Rayment on July 2, 2005 while impaired, court previously heard.

He had a blood alcohol level of more than 200 — more than 2 1/2 times the legal limit — when his Mercedes slammed head-on into the taxi on Derry Road near Fifth Line.

Rayment died in hospital a day after the crash.

Halton Crown prosecutor Jim Coppolino sought a jail sentence of between 21 to 24 months. Defence lawyer Doug Lendt asked for a conditional sentence of house arrest.

A petition circulating on the Facebook website called for Harrison to receive a minimum five years in prison.

Harrison was supposed to be the designated driver that night for his friends at a house keg party.

In fact, his friends refused to get in his car and he sped past them just before the crash. They pulled him from his burning car, court previously heard.

Four young passengers in the taxi were also injured in the 3 a.m. crash. Three suffered several fractures and all remain traumatized.

Harrison's Mercedes was travelling east on Derry Road when it crossed into the westbound lane. He suffered a broken leg and a hip injury.

At the time of the crash, Harrison was already under 24 months of probation after being convicted of a domestic assault in February, 2007.

He will also be on two years probation once he completes his jail sentence.

— Torstar News Service

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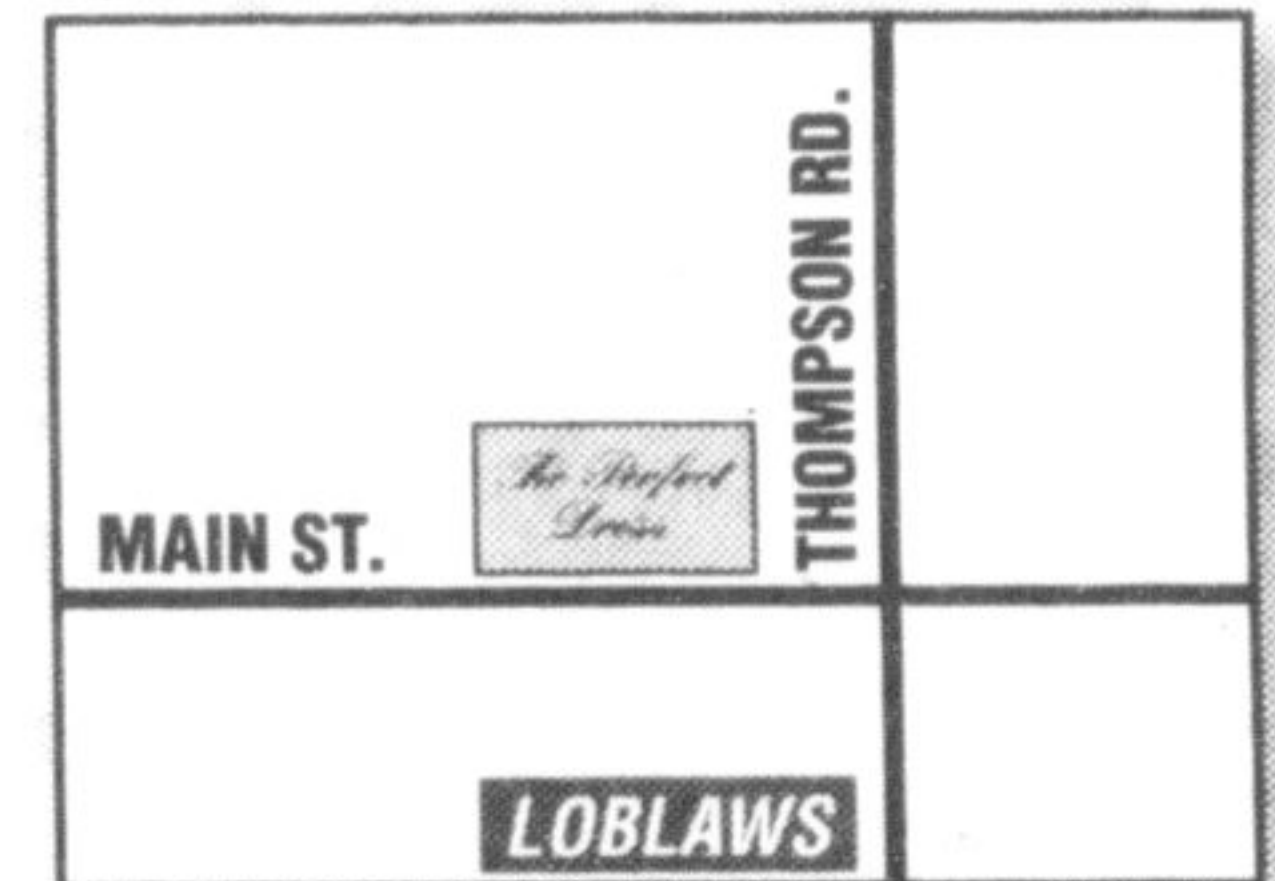


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