

# Comment & Opinions

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Send your letters  
to the editor  
to the address below

## EDITORIAL

### Be aware, children are back in school

They're back... those yellow school buses and children of all ages and sizes, trudging down residential streets with knapsacks on their backs or darting across busy intersections.

Next week is, of course, back to school time, and drivers have to notch their mental and physical driving skills up another level.

Residential and main roads — especially near schools — will be clogged with parents rushing to get their kids to school on time.

School buses will be making frequent stops with warning lights flashing, picking up and dropping off precious passengers.

Most of the older students will have their parents' safety lessons ringing in their ears; but some of the kids on our roads will be eager little Junior and Senior Kindergarten students, encountering traffic and using the rules of the roads for the first time by themselves.

Please, be mindful of children as you go about your business. Ensure that you don't exceed the speed limit; that you are alert to one or more children crossing at busy intersections; and especially that you stop the legal distance behind or in front of school buses with their red signals flashing.

It's every school bus driver's nightmare to see a car careening past the flashing lights, with an innocent student just stepping into the street.

Close calls happens every day of school season. Please make sure it isn't you behind the wheel.



### Website separates shysters from saints

Well, I suppose it was only a matter of time: there is now an entire website devoted exclusively to Canadian lawyers.

Actually, this may be an honour the lawyers would rather live without. This website is the brainchild of Torontonians John Styles. And he is no fan of lawyers.

Over the past decade, he's spent tens of thousands of dollars fighting skirmishes with the legal profession.

He started the website as a kind of legal Better Business Bureau, separating the saints from the

shysters. Anyone with access to a computer can visit the website (<http://www.canlaw.com>) and find out if a specific lawyer has been the subject of a complaint.

"We're trying to provide a service to both the legal profession, which refuses to do its own housecleaning, and to the world at large," said Styles.

The man has a point. Lawyers are notoriously reluctant to air their own dirty laundry.

Last year in Ontario alone, there were nearly 5,000 complaints registered with the Law Society of

Upper Canada. The Law Society — self-styled watchdog of the legal profession in Ontario — bestirred itself to act on exactly 160 of them — and then issued only a slap on the wrist more often than not.

Will John Styles' website change the common perception of lawyers as pond scum in pinstripes? Probably not — but the Dumb Lawyer jokes going around may help to vent some of that public spleen.

These are examples of less-than-stirring performances by courtroom lawyers who began speaking before their brains were in gear. To wit:

LAWYER: Now, Mrs. Johnston, how was your first marriage terminated?

WITNESS: By death.  
LAWYER: And by whose death was it terminated?

LAWYER: What was your relationship with the plaintiff?  
WITNESS: She is my daughter.  
LAWYER: And was she your daughter on Feb. 13, 1987?

LAWYER: Do you know how many months pregnant you are now?

DEFENDANT: I will be three months Nov. 8th.  
LAWYER: Apparently then, the date of conception was Aug. 8th?

DEFENDANT: Yes.  
LAWYER: And what were you and your husband doing at that time?

LAWYER: Doctor Davis, as a coroner, how many autopsies have



**Basic Black**  
Arthur Black

you performed on dead people?  
WITNESS: All of my autopsies have been performed on dead people.

To be fair, lawyers might be forgiven for the odd mental lapse. They're not always dealing with brain surgeons on the stand.

LAWYER: Mrs. Wilson, is your appearance this morning pursuant to a deposition notice which I sent to your attorney?

DEFENDANT: No. This is how I dress when I go to work.

LAWYER: And lastly, Gary, all your responses to my questions must be oral. OK? Now, what school do you go to?

DEFENDANT: Oral.  
LAWYER: How old are you?

DEFENDANT: Oral.  
LAWYER: Ms. Delacourt, would you describe yourself as sexually active?

DEFENDANT: No, I just lie there.

Nope, lawyers don't have it easy. As the humourist Roy Blount Junior once wrote:

"Lawyers must go to school for years and years, often with little sleep and with great sacrifice to their first wives."

You can say what you will about lawyers, but when it comes to money... you gotta hand it to them.

### It's unfair to hold us hostage

Dear Editor,

I am a Grade 12 student returning to high school in the fall.

I am angered by the fact that because the board and the teachers' union insist on using the students as pawns in their giant chess game, the only ones who can really lose are the students.

As a student, I see the detrimental effect that increasing class sizes have on the quality of education.

When the pupil/teacher ratio climbs to 30 or more to one, the student's ability to learn is compromised.

The increase in class sizes can cause some of the struggling students to slip through the cracks and not get the extra help they need.

Last year, everyone felt the effects of the possibility of the teachers' strike, school spirit was low, and many students were concerned about losing their year if university admission marks were not sent in.

### LETTERS

Once the May admissions date passed, a wave of relief seemed to pass over the school.

I don't think it was fair to hold last year's OACs hostage, nor do I think it fair to hold this year's class at a possible disadvantage to the other boards because of a shortened school year.

The past three years at my school have been quite enjoyable and I have been fortunate to have many excellent teachers who have taken time out of their busy schedules to help me understand a particular concept.

I am worried that if the board insists on cutting the number of teachers the extra help will stop — not because the teachers don't care, but because they simply don't have the time.

A Concerned York Region  
Secondary Student

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