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EDITORIAL

End the tragedies

How many more must die?

There are many more weeks of winter left, and the staggering death toll of snowmobilers so far this season begs the question: how many more people will die on the ice?

Eleven people went through the ice of Lake Scugog within five days this month and four died. Two more snowmobilers were killed over the weekend near Lake Simcoe, a third hit a tree and died near Midland, and a fourth is in hospital in Newmarket with head injuries sustained when he also hit a tree.

Why aren't the daily, high-profile media warnings being heeded? Where is their common sense? How many more tragedies like this must take men from their families?

And here is a controversial question: Why do all these flirting-with-death tragedies involve men?

Local politicians and winter sports experts around Lake Simcoe and Lake Scugog say their communities are suffering from a bad image and the mishaps are driving away tourists and hurting businesses.

They maintain it's neither the ice nor the lakes which are killing snowmobilers — it's the lack of common sense combined sometimes with alcohol, changeable weather conditions, reduced visibility, and high speeds.

The lakes and waterways are too vast to post public warning signs at regular intervals.

So mothers and daughters, please warn the men in your lives to treat snowmobiles with more respect and observe common sense rules when out on the ice.

Please let this string of winter tragedies end.



If our LCBO ain't broke, then why fix it?

I think Premier Mike Harris sings Yankee Doodle Dandy in the shower.

Between gambling, casinos, popping up across Ontario and the government's exploring the option of privatizing the sale of booze, the face of our province is starting to look like a U.S. state.

You're being encouraged to win and not work your way to the top. Don't worry. You can drown your sorrows by taking a trip to the corner store to pick up a two-four.

I may be a fallen protestant, but my Methodist upbringing continues to



Off the Record

Joan Ransberry

guide me. The simple fact is, I dislike my province, housing and promoting gambling.

If you want to lose your shirt at the tables, that's your business. But when government officials turn into blackjack dealers, I question it.

Last week, I witnessed Whitchurch-

Stouffville Council make a wise move when it sent a message to Consumer and Commercial Relations Minister David Tsubouchi asking that he abandon plans to privatize liquor sales.

The Ontario Liquor Boards Employees' Union is involved in a slick campaign designed to convince the government not to privatize its 595 booze outlets. Workers at the liquor stores in Stouffville and Uxbridge are keeping a keen eye on developments.

Stouffville store manager Brent Gibson and assistant manager Kevin McWhinnie know this business

They'll tell you that when it comes to alcohol, the government runs a clean operation, is accountable and tries to keep a close reign on who can buy and who can't.

As well, last year, the LCBO profits stood at a record \$730 million over and above taxes. Also, a survey shows that 85 per cent of Ontarians are satisfied with the current operation.

Here's the question: If it ain't broke, why fix it?

Of course, this government wants to make even more money. Will the PCs ever learn that life is not always and only about money? Don't be surprised if a soon-to-be released report includes the option of closing 322 stores, creating agency stores and contracting out.

Alcohol isn't like other products. Although enjoyed in moderation by many Ontarians, it's still an intoxicant with many health, safety and social costs, including motor vehicle crashes, murder, suicide and chronic illness, the union pointed out. The sale of alcohol requires careful regulation and handling only by trained people.

What a difference a responsible government makes. Our beer and liquor stores are clean and the staffs are trained and responsible people.

Years ago, I bought booze in a corner store in the U.S. The store keeper had a three-day old beard, wore a filthy shirt and the store was gungy.

Last year in Ontario, LCBO staff challenged 560,000 people and refused to serve more than 76,000. I doubt that my U.S. merchant would refuse anyone.

Alberta is the only province in Canada with private liquor outlets.

Guess what? After privatization, Alberta drinkers saw the price of booze shoot up, brand selection decreased, liquor offenses went up, robberies increased, alcohol consumption increased and 1,600 people lost their jobs.

Heading to White House for stardom

Since writing my last column, I have simulated a parachute jump, played a make-believe hand-held video game and expressed faux amazement at the price of a recliner.

The place was an ad agency in Toronto. The occasion was my first commercial audition.

Apparently, the casting director failed to recognize a star when he saw one because the phone has remained ominously silent since my debut. Such is the lot of one trying vainly to earn a little extra on the side without drawing on the few brain cells remaining in the aging cranium.

Regular readers may recall that my bid for fame started just over a year ago when I answered a want ad for beer commercials. Donning a hip top, my best black pants and my plastic country singer boots, I set off for the big city in my retro wagon.

The talent agency was so bowled over by my potential that they put me on their books immediately and set up a photo shoot which cost me an arm and a leg. Several days later, I had to select the shots I liked best so that



Kate's Corner

Kate Gilderdale

they could be enlarged and sent out to all those eager clients.

I squinted at the blurry batch of tiny, perfect prints and picked out those I hoped were the most flattering. As the months went by, it began to dawn on me that overnight success is, as they warn you in those ubiquitous celebrity profiles, a cruel myth.

I'm working at it, but if it arrives at all, I fear it will be posthumously.

Perhaps I should change tactics and get a job at the White House. Women who work there seem to be able to win fame without even going for an audition. Of course, I wouldn't land Monica's role, but I might be able to step into the shoes of Linda Tripp.

Our Linda is the one who blew the gaff on Monica's alleged affair with William Jefferson Clinton. Tripp, described by *The Toronto Star* as a "bit-

ter former White House employee who now works at the Pentagon" is a fine, upstanding American, according to close friend Lucianne Goldberg.

"The woman doesn't have a political bone in her body," gushed Goldberg.

"She's a soccer mom, with two kids, four dogs and a nice house in the country. She works 10 hours a day and just wants to put this behind her."

It goes without saying that a doting mother, who encourages her children in sporting endeavours, works full time and supplies a nice country home for not one, but four canine companions, would be incapable of plotting against the president.

She probably tapes private conversations with her nearest and dearest just to have something special to remember them by.

Too bad she's not a Clinton fan. He may, nevertheless, take comfort from the wise words of Russell Baker: "A group of politicians deciding to dump a president because his morals are bad is like the Mafia getting together to bump off the Godfather for not going to church on Sunday."

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