

OPINION

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Residents don't seem to care about drunk driving

Wake up, folks. I am disappointed with many of our citizens in York Region. While I realize many of you are, indeed, involved with important issues and causes, many others of you do nothing outside yourselves.

Impaired driving is still our nation's No. 1 criminal cause of death.

It is also 100-per-cent preventable. Although the awareness is continuously out there, the OPP and York Regional Police are still having to lay an unacceptable amount of charges.

Over the Easter weekend, York police stopped 1,018 vehicles and tested 41 suspected drunk drivers.

That means during that weekend in York Region, you and I and our loved ones were at risk of death or serious injury a minimum of 41 times.

And those are only our reduced risks. What about those drunks who were not stopped?

While some blew under the legal limit, let me remind you it only takes one drink to impair your judgment.

It takes only one drink to destroy an entire family.

What is even more disheartening is the continuous display of complacency in

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such a highly populated region.

Impaired driving can affect us all. People, you are not immune to the carnage and devastation that can be caused by such a selfish and irresponsible act.

Regardless of public pleas and invitations for you to become better informed as to how you can help, I am saddened to the fact not one new person attended our recent public information meeting.

Perhaps you just can't read or perhaps you just don't care.

Regardless, as volunteers who know far too well the preventable pain and devastation caused by impaired driving, we will continue to strive to be here, when you are maimed or when your child is killed on a public roadway.

Many thanks to all those volunteers who continue to work tirelessly in the face of adversity.

Without you, no doubt, more people would be dead.

MARGARET WILLIAMS
PRESIDENT, MADD
YORK REGION CHAPTER



Dangers of using pesticides in your yard

A real estate agent once visited me at home and offered to sell my house. I was tempted for about a nanosecond before turning him down cold.

The house I have lived in for decades in Vancouver is not just a property to me. My home, especially the back yard, means so much more.

The back yard isn't just my own private place of refuge in the summer. It's a sacred place for my family as well.

It's where my kids played tag as children and where they now socialize with their friends as adults. It's where my wife and I hold family barbecues and dinners in the summer. And, it's where my father-in-law gets down on his hands and knees to pull weeds and tend to the St. John's Wort and tulips. Our pet dog, Huckleberry, was even buried in the back yard when he died.

I wouldn't trade any of my

memories that have taken place on that small stretch of grass for anything in the world. I know I'm not alone in my passion. Our yards and gardens are a symbolic zone, a private sanctuary. Our public parks are also treasured spaces.

They're the public commons where we can throw Frisbees, play volleyball, read a book or (my favorite) take a nap.

There has been a tremendous amount of interest in green spaces. And with good reason. Many of the private yards and public parks we enjoy are coated with toxic chemical pesticides to kill weeds. The problem is they work too well and exposure to them can damage our health.

In 2003, the Ontario College of Family Physicians published a scientific literature review that showed "consistent links to serious illnesses, such as cancer, reproductive problems and neurological diseases" associated with chronic pesticide exposure.



David Suzuki

It stands to reason children and pets are often more exposed since they're the ones most likely to be found rolling playing on the grass during the summer months.

Children are also more vulnerable to the health effects of pesticide exposure because their young bodies are still developing.

So what exactly are we spraying on our lawns? At least 50 active pesticide ingredients registered for use in Canada have been banned

► Go to davidsuzuki.org to take the Suzuki challenge.

in other countries due to health or environmental concerns. One popular lawn herbicide, 2,4-D, can be found in products lining the garden care section of your local hardware store.

But don't look for it in Denmark, Norway or Sweden. The herbicide 2,4-D is no longer sold in Scandinavia because of health and environmental concerns.

Another report, published by my foundation, showed that more than 6,000 cases of acute pesticide poisoning occur in Canada each year. Even more frightening, half of those poisonings involve children under six.

Despite the clear evidence against chemical pesticides, more than 30 per cent of Canadians with gardens still use them, but there is evidence this practice may be coming to an end. Many cities

have passed bylaws banning the use of these lawn and garden pesticides. We can look forward to the day when a neighbour applying these chemicals to their yards will seem as out of place as a smoker lighting up a cigarette on a transatlantic flight.

That day may be just around the corner, at least in some parts of Canada.

In 2003, Quebec banned the use and sale of many lawn pesticides.

Now, the Ontario government is proposing similar legislation. PEI also held hearings on a potential provincewide ban.

Provincial action is important because, while cities and towns can restrict the use of these chemicals on public and private property, provincial governments have the power to ban the sale of cosmetic pesticides.

I hope that residents across Canada, especially in Ontario and PEI, make their voices heard on this issue.

LETTERS POLICY

The Sun-Tribune welcomes your letters. All submissions must be less than 400 words and must include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The Sun-Tribune reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit for clarity and space.

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