

Caledon Citizen

Covering all of Caledon

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25 Queen Street, North, Bolton L7E 1C1

Phone: 905-857-6626
Toll Free: 1-888-557-6626
Fax: 905-857-6363

www.caledoncitizen.com

Publisher:

BRUCE R. HAIRE

Editorial

Managing Editor

BILL REA

editor@caledoncitizen.com

Reporters

Jon Yaneff

j.yaneff@caledoncitizen.com

David Anderson

Advertising

Director of Sales

JOHN ARCHIBALD

Sales Reps

BETH WILSON

sales@caledoncitizen.com

Annette Derraugh

Stephanie Godzik

Nancy Stenhouse

Business

Office Administrator

CHERYL PHILLIPS

admin@caledoncitizen.com

Janice Côté

Composing

Manager

KRISTEN HAIRE

Ad Designers

Penny Gilbertson

Joanne Radyk-Carrick

Lisa Rosati

Brian Valdock

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Editorial

If change is needed to govern young drivers, it can't be reactionary

Tragedies frequently prompt people, including those in government, to look at ways to improve situations, in the hopes that such heart break can be avoided in the future.

Such is the case these days, as Premier Dalton McGuinty and Transportation Minister Jim Bradley have stated they are looking into all aspects of road safety, in the interests of avoiding future tragedies.

This has been prompted by recent mishap near Port Carling in Muskoka, in which three young people lost their lives.

Of course, if there are steps that can be taken that can help prevent incidents like this from happening again, we have to be all for them. But at the same time, we must be assured that they will really help, and not just be gut reactions to tragic circumstances.

At this point, we don't know just what went on in Muskoka to cause this tragedy, although we anticipate the details will come out in the fullness of time.

But it is true that automobiles are large, fast-moving machines, meaning they are potentially dangerous, especially if used improperly or carelessly. The reality is no matter how well we build cars, and how well-maintained roads are, and how good a job police do when it comes to enforcing road safety, there are going to be incidents, and they are sometimes going to have tragic results.

We should also beware of knee-jerk reactions.

It's very easy to point to the ages of these victims and jump to the conclusion that their youth was the main factor in this. Well, since we don't have all the details of what went on, we don't think that's a very smart way to proceed. While the young might sometimes do foolish, ill-advised or dangerous things, they certainly don't have a monopoly on stupidity. People of any age can make mistakes.

It doesn't take much to cause an accident. There are many possible factors, including excessive speeds on unfamiliar roads, brief lapses in attention, distractions, unexpected mechanical failures in the vehicle, losing control after swerving to avoid an animal or some obstruction on the road, and many, many others. Any one of us could compile an impressively long list.

If McGuinty and Bradley plan to look at all aspects, they have to seriously mean all of them. True, the age of the drivers have to be part of that, as does the program for graduated licences, road and car construction, driver training, enforcement of the rules of the road, etc.

There are a lot of factors to be considered, and a proper and effective look will address all of them.

That's what is really needed here.

Our Readers Write

Thanks for supporting bazaar

On May 31, the Davis Centre held their annual bazaar and it was a great success.

On behalf of the Helping Hands Volunteers, we would like to thank the entire community, family, and friends who supported us this year.

A special thanks to Zehr's, Maple Farm Supply Ltd., Husky Injection Molding Ltd., Giant Tiger, Style Automotive, Bliss Beauty Bar, Angry Tomato, Garden Foods, Cedar Hills Pontiac Buick, Mars Canada Inc. Empire Theatre, Fines Ford, Empire Theatre and Jan Barron-Richter Reiki Master, for their contributions to our silent auction.

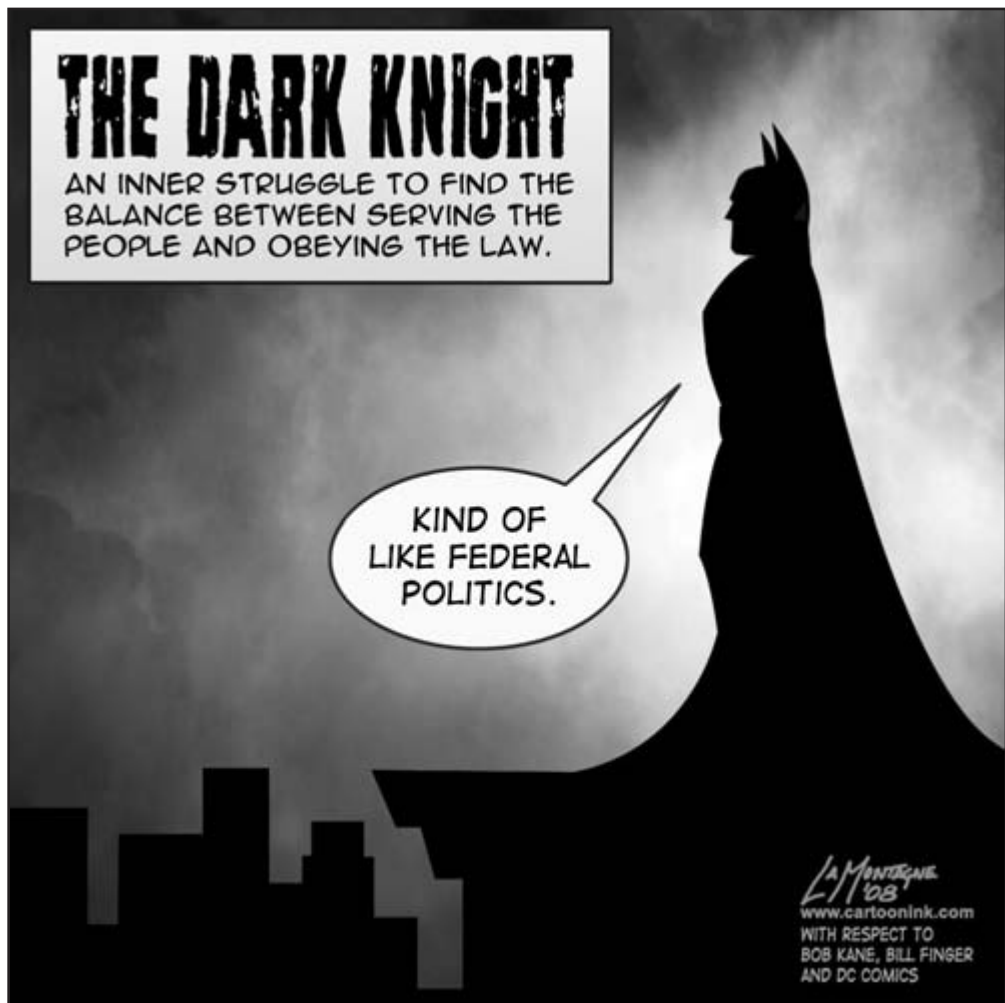
All of the proceeds from the bazaar are used to fund day trips, entertainment events and special items to enhance the lives of the residents of the Davis Centre and the participants of our adult day program.

Thanks again and we look forward to doing it all again next year.

Pearl Auer,

President,

Helping Hands Volunteers



The right amount for Truscott?

By its very nature, a judicial system is supposed to dispense justice.

That means it's supposed to look after society, protecting you and me from bad elements and dealing fairly with those who have violated the laws. It is, admittedly, hard to define exactly how those two ends should be achieved. But since our judicial system is administered by people, we have to accept the fact that its going to get it wrong on occasion. In the case of the Canadian system, as I've stated in this spot a number of times, the track record leaves me a little uncomfortable.

But there's the other extreme too. When we have the right person and we know we have the right person, how far are we expected to go when it comes to claiming out proverbial pound of flesh? And when the system blows it, how far are we expected to go to make amends?

In the case of Steven Truscott, officials in Ontario have taken the considered advice of a learned man of the law, Sydney Robins, and decided to award him \$6.5 million in compensation for his wrongful conviction for the 1959 murder of Lynne Harper.

I have read the Robins report, which went to some effort to convey the fact that this 14-year-old boy was sentenced to be hanged for a crime it was later determined that he never committed. And even after the death sentence was lifted, he still had to spend about 10 years in custody.

Robins pointed out he never had the chance to go to high school or some post-secondary institution, and after he was released from



Bill Rea

prison on parole, he had to live under an assumed name and his movements and activities were subject to restrictions that few of us would have tolerated. And despite all that, he stressed that Truscott has led an upstanding and successful life since he got out. Despite these problems, he found some way to get on and stay on the high road. There were also references to the loss of privacy he had to endure while in prison, and one has to wonder what kind of income he might have realized in his career had he not all those hurdles to overcome.

"It was the state, through the operation of the criminal justice system, that inflicted the harm on Mr. Truscott," Robins concluded. "We are all dependent upon the proper functioning of the criminal justice system and we must all share the burden of its errors."

In addition to the \$6.5 million, Truscott's wife Marlene is to receive \$100,000 for the work she did to get her husband exonerated.

Are these amounts fair?

Who's to know? I could not begin to figure out a way to quantify a monetary value

on what Truscott must have gone through. Indeed, I don't think anyone could, with any degree of reliability.

The purpose is to try to make some amends for wrongs that have been done. I don't believe there's been any attempt here to make Truscott rich as a simple way of letting the judicial system clear a guilty conscience.

It is hard to decide how our system should make amends when it goofs.

But another good question is how far should the system go in dealing with a clearly guilty person.

Such an issue is topical right now in California, as Susan Atkins is trying to get out of prison.

This woman is quite a piece of work. She was a devoted follower of Charles Manson in the late '60s, and one of his most prolific killers. She was convicted of being in on eight murders, including that of actress Sharon Tate. In fact, Tate looked into Atkins' eyes as she tearfully begged for her own life and the life of her unborn child (she was eight-and-a-half months pregnant at the time of her death). Atkins later openly bragged about how she blew off those pleas.

And now it seems Atkins is dying of brain cancer. She has had one leg amputated, and is paralyzed on one side. According to one news story I read, she can't even sit up in bed.

I am opposed to capital punishment, so this is a person who I think is a prime candidate to spend the rest of her life in prison. And I would also argue that has

See 'Time' on page 7