

Apparently, there's more work to do

The wonderful thing about statistics is that they can prove anything. And everything. Pick your poison. Chose your statistics. And presto, you've got an ironclad case to support whatever it is you want to support.

Hence, huge headlines last week in all the Toronto newspapers boasting about the "fact" that despite what you may have heard - no doubt some of it from these very same newspapers - Toronto is the safe haven of Canada when it comes to crime.

Or, as the Toronto Star splashed the news across the top of its' front page, "We're Canada's safest city."

Mind you, one if five homicides in Canada occur in Toronto but hey, when you count murders as a percentage of the overall population instead of counting them as dead bodies, it's easy to brag about how "safe" the city is.

And, in most areas of Toronto it is quite safe. There aren't too many shootings in Rosedale or Forest Hill, for example, or in some of the more affluent middle and upper middle income bastions such as The Beaches. But in a few specific areas - primarily the northwest, certain nightclub areas, and parts of Scarborough in the east - gangs, drugs and guns amount to a deadly recipe for the locals.

The headlines this week in the same Toronto newspapers, illustrate the disconnect between the deadly concentrated realities and the overall statistical conclusions.

It seems that in good old "safe" Toronto, the police are perplexed by the discovery of a bullet-riddled SUV containing the bodies of three young men.

At the time of this writing, the SUV's driver was missing and police feared he too may be a victim.

Two days earlier, 17-year-old Shazad Khawaja was shot dead close to his apartment in the city's northeast end. A few days before that, William Ross Magill, 64, was stabbed to death in his mid-town apartment. And two days before that, a gunman shot and killed Michael Watson, 28, at an east end restaurant/nightclub.

That's not even counting the four people who were wounded during the past week in non-fatal shootings in Toronto.

And so it goes. In fact, the same day the newspapers were bragging about how safe Toronto has become, they ran stories about a young man being shot to death in a part of the city where five days earlier another young man was shot and critically wounded, citing one areas resident saying that shootings in the area are so common that, "To me, it's a natural phenomenon."

This is not to suggest that Toronto is a modern day equivalent of towns such as Tombstone in the old U.S. wild west - or even some of the current major U.S. cities.

It's just to demonstrate that anybody can use statistics, particularly as a percentage of larger statistics, to demonstrate pretty much anything. Traditionally, in the Statistics Canada category of cities with a population of 500,000 or more, Quebec City has ruled the roost in terms of the number of reported crimes. Actually, they held that title from 1991 to 2006, but in 2007, Quebec City reported 4,524 crimes per 100,000 people, while Toronto reported "only" 4,524 crimes per 100,000 people.

Toronto Police Chief Bill Blair, alas, jumped on the "safest city" story - after all, it makes him look good, doesn't it? - and told reporters that, "Unfortunately, people's perceptions are often created around a single incident or a series of incidents over a short period of time. That can create an impression that this is not a safe city."

Well Chief Blair, parts of it aren't safe. In 2007, for example, Toronto had 111 homicides, it's highest since 1992, and already this year the body count has reached 35, down six from this time last year.

The other thing to remember with these statistics is that they represent a total of all violent crimes, not just murders. As a result of lumping all crimes into one statistical soup then, you get a kind of moral and criminal equivalent between murdering somebody and punching them in the nose.

Apparently Torontonians punch fewer people in the nose than other people do. It's just that they murder them instead.

According to Blair, however, "the numbers are positive, but there's still a lot of work to do."

Apparently.



National Affairs

Claire Hoy

Time to let Susan Atkins out

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been accomplished. True, she still breathes, but it seems she only has months left to live, if that. Prevailing wisdom says she'll be gone before any of us sit down to another Christmas dinner.

Granted this is an American example I'm citing, and there are some differences in the judicial systems between the two countries. But the question still remain as to how far the incarceration of a person like Susan Atkins should be pushed. The system is sup-

posed to protect society from people like her, and in this case, it's mission accomplished. She hasn't killed anyone in almost 40 years, and it's unlikely she's about to now. In her condition, she represents neither a threat to flee or a threat to reoffend.

So what possible benefit is there in keeping her in prison? True, she has not served her entire life, but she has served all the quality time since she was arrested. All that remains is the finale.

I read Helter Skelter, the book written by Vincent Bugliosi, the man who prose-

cuted most of the trials of Manson and his followers, when I was still in my teens, and it scared me to think people like Atkins could exist.

But time passes, and people change, as do their opinions. The families of the victims will never change their views of the killers, and I don't think anyone would expect them to. But society is capable of changing.

There are those who would argue that Atkins is entitled to the same amount of compassion she showed her victims. I maintain that to believe that, you have to

be prepared to hold someone like Atkins up as a role model. I think we can do better than that.

Besides, if we as a society believe we are better than the Susan Atkins of the world, I maintain we have an obligation to prove it every now and then.

Trustcott's case was more complicated, because it required an exercise in quantifying something that really can't be quantified. In Atkins' case, the question is simple; to open a door or leave it shut.

Open it.

Our Readers Write

Group urges community to support council

I spoke on behalf of Our Caledon, Our Choice as a delegation at the July 8 Caledon Town council meeting.

I just wanted to send a note of thanks from myself personally and on behalf of our Board of Directors for the great public turnout at this meeting. It meant a lot to have such a strong showing of public support for council and its Official Plan for Caledon. We know that the delegations who spoke represented the true majority in Caledon on maintaining Caledon's beautiful qualities

and ensuring Caledon's right to choose its destiny.

We can see that the silent majority is transforming into a vocal and active majority. This is great news to Our Caledon Our Choice and helps to encourage us and strengthen our resolve. We will continue to need this support going forward. Having said that, there is another group that needs this community's participation even more - Town Council.

Council needs the ongoing active participation of residents and businesses via

attendance at public meetings, letter writing, phone calls, petition signing, etc. This reaffirms without any doubt how we feel on this issue and gives council the strength it needs to "stay the course."

Because many of the issues we face in Caledon are the result of implementing Provincial planning policies, the Town has asked the Province for help. We encourage Caledon residents to contact our MPP Sylvia Jones and Premier Dalton McGuinty to let them know that you want the Province

to get involved. Lastly, we would like to strongly encourage you to share with others, piquing their interest and encouraging others to participate so that many, many more will join us in expressing our majority view and opinions on this issue.

If you have any questions, comments, suggestions or concerns, please write us at ourcaledonourchoice@gmail.com and we'll respond to you.

Rob Mezzapelli,
Co-Chair

Our Caledon, Our Choice

Tilson heads annual delegation in Europe

Last month, I had the honour of not only once again participating in an all-party, parliamentary delegation to Europe, but I was also provided the unique privilege of leading the delegation through my new role as President of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association.

Once a year, the Canadian delegation, which represents both the House of Commons and the Senate, travels to Europe to meet and discuss matters of mutual importance for Canada and Europe. The matters often range from economic and democratic development, to the importance of international law. A number of substantial issues are debated with European parliamentarians. The focus of talks this year revolved primarily around democracy throughout Europe and the importance of market economic systems for both the developed and developing world.

Unlike previous years, the 2008 delegation was invited by French Senator Nathalie Goulet to visit the Juno Beach Centre and attend a memorial ceremony in Flers, Normandy, to commemorate General Charles De Gaulle's call to resistance June 18, 1940. After exploring the awe-inspiring facility, I would encourage any

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David Tilson
MP Dufferin-Caledon



Canadian who is planning to visit Europe to take the time to tour the Juno Beach Centre. It simultaneously provides a powerful monument to the contribution of Canadians during D-Day, while providing a captivating educational experience for young and old alike. While I was examining the multiple monuments, I was drawn to the cenotaph, where I was pleased to find commemorative plaques from both Dufferin and Caledon, honouring local soldiers who fought valiantly in the D-Day offensive.

Amid the many conferences and discussions, I was asked twice to address the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on both the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and Canada's experience with migration and democracy.

My first address highlighted the significance of EBRD which, since its founding in 1941, has promoted the continual alter-

ation of formally centrally-planned economies in Central and Eastern Europe to market based economies. As the eighth largest shareholder, Canada displays our commitment to the Bank's medium-term operational priorities through our financial contributions, which total 3.4 per cent of the Bank's total capital. The EBRD uses monetary assistance from countries like Canada to create and strengthen institutions that ensure markets function well; to promote the key role that small business can play in creating dynamic, competitive and more equitable economies; and further promote democratic systems.

During my address, I paid special praise to EBRD's recognition of the correlation between environmental and social issues and the long-term economic and political stability of a region. Essentially, the transition to a market-based economy is intrinsically linked to the evolution of political democ-

racy, and vice versa, through their mutual recognition and reliance on the concepts of freedom and equality.

The second address dealt with Canadian philosophy on democracy in our immigration and migration policies. Given Canada's diverse and multicultural population, our country can fully appreciate the potential difficulties that may arise while attempting to fully integrate immigrants of varying cultural and religious persuasions, into the overarching democratic system. For historical and geographical differences, the Canadian approach to immigrant integration may not be emulated without adjustment within Europe. I believe that our European partners could learn from our successes, as we could surely benefit from theirs.

Participating in yet another Canada-Europe parliamentary delegation has further solidified, in my mind, the importance for continued cohesion between Canada and the numerous countries in the European Union on existing and future matters of mutual importance. The similarities, as well as the differences between our countries results in a vibrant forum for the recognition of issues and the intelligent discussion of mutually beneficial solutions.