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# THE WRITER'S EDGE

The Shopping Frog Publication

July 1st Sunday -2020

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## Province's Ontario Line may cause years-long delay of major Toronto affordable housing project

thestar.com / By Ben SpurrTransportation Reporter Tues., Jan. 28, 2020

A major provincial transit project could delay the construction of hundreds of affordable housing units through Mayor John Tory's signature program in a clash that threatens to put two of Toronto's most pressing needs in conflict with one another.

At issue is 770 Don Mills Rd., a property that currently serves as a parking lot for the Ontario Science Centre. It's one of 11 surplus city-owned sites slated for conversion to mixed-income development under the Housing Now initiative that Mayor John Tory has framed as a key element of council's efforts to tackle Toronto's housing affordability problem.

But the site is now also along the path of the Ontario Line, the new \$11-billion, 16-kilometre transit project Premier Doug Ford's government has pitched as critical to delivering badly needed transit to the city. The property sits close to where the Ontario Line would connect with the under-construction

Eglinton Crosstown LRT.

According to a Jan. 21 report from city real estate agency Create To, the Don Mills housing project "has been delayed for several years due to the planning work for the proposed Ontario Line."

Metrolinx, the provincial transit agency overseeing the Ontario Line, said that since learning of the housing project the organization is exploring options to avoid any delay.

A schedule CreateTO released last February showed construction for the housing development

opment was supposed to start next year, with occupancy by 2023. The move-in date slipped to 2025 in a report released last April.

In the January report, CreateTO states the timeline for the project is "subject to Ontario Line requirements," and estimates construction won't start until 2023, with occupancy expected by 2026.

The agency submitted a development application for the site in 2018, but the report says it will have to be revised, which CreateTO anticipates could be done by mid-2021.



## LEVY: Expect more Bloor bike lanes this summer

Enabled by our weak mayor and emboldened by council's anti-car contingent, the city's cycling bureaucrats are set to ram through planned bike lanes on Bloor St. this summer.

The Bloor West Bikeway Extension project calls for the installation of 4.5 kilometres of lanes, from Shaw St. to Runnymede Rd, adding to the existing busy 2.6-kilometre stretch, which starts at Avenue Rd.

Based on what has already occurred

with the first of set of bike lanes — really a foregone conclusion when installed as a pilot in the summer of 2016 — this move is guaranteed to create congestion headaches throughout the entire area and have a direct impact on the dozens of mom-and-pop shops along the route.

The money set aside in the 2020 capital budget for the bikeway extension is \$2 million but that cost estimate will "be refined" during the project design, says transportation (Continued...P-9)

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Regular readers of this column will know I am a proud owner of a classic automobile — a turquoise and white 1955 Pontiac Laurentian built at the Oshawa factory of General Motors at a time when the most frequently heard directive to the workers was “close enough.”

Like most owners, my wife Yarmila (who gifted me the car for my 55th birthday) and I belong to a classic car club, in our case the Thornhill Cruisers. Usually when we gather to chat the subject we discuss most often has to do with older automobiles like ours that are powered by gasoline-powered internal combustion engines — engines that in one form or another have been around for more than a couple of centuries.

However, once in a while someone in the crowd will introduce the terms “all-electric” or “hybrid electric” and then wonder out loud how long it will be before one of these vehicles will be old enough to be welcomed at a classic car show.

Actually, if the truth be known, the idea of powering a vehicle with something other than gasoline, electricity for example, is nearly as old as the use of gasoline. To make this point even more interesting is the fact that one of the earliest of those electric cars was developed right here in Toronto.

Creating such a vehicle was the result of an idea put forward by prominent city patent attorney Frederick Fether-

stonaugh. He had been keeping a close eye on the various propulsion ideas being put forward in Great Britain as well as south of the border and eventually decided to develop his own automobile — one powered by electricity. As described in a Globe newspaper account dated Dec. 7, 1896, Fred got together with John Dixon, who owned the

It was estimated that once out on the streets the vehicle, powered by Still's four horsepower motor that weighed a mere 100 pounds and was supplied with electricity from 270 pounds worth of lead-acid storage batteries, could achieve at least 15 miles per hour. And it was claimed that recharging would be necessary after five hours of street running time.

draw off the power he needed to charge his car's batteries.

Did the radial railway company know about this? Don't ask.

Unfortunately, not much more is known about the specifications, characteristics or disposition of this unique Canadian vehicle, other than it did make an appearance at an early edition of the Toronto Industrial Exhibition (CNE).

Built in 1906 for Imperial Coaches Ltd. by Hutchinson and Son in the company's Toronto factory on Simcoe St., this storage battery-powered “Touring Car” was given the patriotic name KING. It cost \$6,500 and had seating for 30 passengers in upholstered splendor. A second vehicle, QUEEN would soon join the fleet. Initially the two were to provide transportation for the general public in competition with the city's street railway company. That didn't work out financially and the vehicles eventually reverted to being used for sightseeing as noted on the accompanying advertising poster. Note the solid rubber tires and the young passenger inspecting the rear suspension. And wake Mr. Hingston the driver after the picture's taken.



Dixon Carriage Works factory on Bay St. near Temperance St., and together they designed a vehicle that weighed 700 pounds and was steered using a tiller. To propel the vehicle, William Still — a well-known electrician who lived and worked at 70 Yorkville Ave. — was commissioned to design and build an electric motor that would be the revolutionary Fetherstonhaugh/Dixon vehicle's power plant. It took Still 18 months to complete his work and finally on Dec. 5, 1896, with a recent snow storm having made the streets impassable, the pioneer electric car made several circuits of the interior of the carriage factory.

Fetherstonaugh, whose suburban home, Lynne Lodge, was located west of the city on the south side of Lakeshore Rd. near the foot of Church St. (today's Royal York Rd.), had a rather interesting way of recharging his vehicle's batteries.

Outside the front door of the Lodge were the tracks of the Toronto and Mimico Electric Light and Railway company whose radial cars (streetcars) operated on 550 (later 600) DC volts of electric current drawn from an overhead wire. (The steel rails acted as “return”). Using a carefully installed “extension cord” he was able to

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## The top 10 causes of death

Of the 56.9 million deaths worldwide in 2016, more than half (54%) were due to the top 10 causes. Ischaemic heart disease and stroke are the world's biggest killers, accounting for a combined 15.2 million deaths in 2016. These diseases have remained the leading causes of death globally in the last 15 years.

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease claimed 3.0 million lives in 2016, while lung cancer (along with trachea and bronchus cancers) caused 1.7 million deaths. Diabetes killed 1.6 million people in 2016, up from less than 1 million in 2000. Deaths due to dementias more than doubled between 2000 and 2016, making it the 5th leading cause of global deaths in 2016 compared to 14th in 2000.

Lower respiratory infections remained the most deadly communicable disease, causing 3.0 million deaths worldwide in 2016. The death rate from diarrhoeal diseases decreased by almost 1 million between 2000 and 2016, but still caused 1.4 million deaths in 2016. Similarly, the number of tuberculosis deaths decreased during the same period, but is still among the top 10 causes with a death toll of 1.3 million. HIV/AIDS is no longer among the world's top 10 causes of death, having killed 1.0 million people in 2016 compared with 1.5 million in 2000.

Road injuries killed 1.4 million people in 2016, about three-quarters (74%) of whom were men and boys.

### Leading causes of death by economy income group

More than half of all deaths in low-income countries in 2016 were caused by the so-called "Group I" conditions, which include communicable diseases, maternal causes, conditions arising during pregnancy and childbirth, and nutritional deficiencies. By

contrast, less than 7% of deaths in high-income countries were due to such causes. Lower respiratory infections were among the leading causes of death across all income groups.

Injuries claimed 4.9 million lives in 2016. More than a quarter (29%) of these deaths were due to road traffic injuries. Low-income countries had the highest mortality rate due to road traffic injuries with 29.4 deaths per 100 000 population –

### Why do we need to know the reasons people die?

Measuring how many people die each year and why they died is one of the most important means – along with gauging how diseases and injuries are affecting people – for assessing the effectiveness of a country's health system.

Cause-of-death statistics help health authorities determine the focus of their public health

actions. A country in which deaths from heart disease and diabetes rise rapidly over a period of a few years, for example, has a strong interest in starting a vigorous programme to encourage lifestyles to help prevent these illnesses. Similarly, if a country recognizes that many children are dying of pneumonia, but only a small portion of the budget is dedicated to providing effective treatment, it can increase spending in this area.

High-income countries have systems in place for collecting information on causes of death. Many low- and

middle-income countries do not have such systems, and the numbers of deaths from specific causes have to be estimated from incomplete data. Improvements in producing high quality cause-of-death data are crucial for improving health and reducing preventable deaths in these countries.

(Courtesy: World Health Organization)



Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) caused 71% of deaths globally, ranging from 37% in low-income countries to 88% in high-income

the global rate was 18.8. Road traffic injuries were also among the leading 10 causes of death in low, lower-middle- and upper-middle-income countries.

Source: Global Health Estimates 2016: Deaths by Cause, Age, Sex, by Country and by Region, 2000-2016. Geneva,

we may be able to contribute to prolonging healthy life expectancies," he said.

LEARN MORE  
"We were especially interested in studying this group of people because we consider them to be a good model of healthy aging, and this is important in societies like Japan where aging is proceeding rapidly," Dr. Kosuke Hashimoto, a researcher at Japan-based Riken Center for Integrative Medical Science (IMS) told the Telegraph.

"If we can find the link between the immune system and aging and longevity,

IMS Deputy Director Piero Carninci told the Telegraph, (Continued...P-10)

## Shhhhh! We know the secret to living past 100

It turns out that the key to more circles around the sun is a supercharged immune system that protects the body from infections.

The secret to living past 100 has finally been revealed by scientists looking to understand what makes some people live longer than others.

Aren't you dying to know? It turns out that longevity is linked to a supercharged immune system that protects the body from infections.

Known as 'super-agers' or 'supercentenarians', these older adults tend to have uniquely potent immune cells that specifically target viruses, bacteria and tumours in the body. In fact, research already shows that supercentenarians

are able to fight off cancer and infections more effectively than others.

According to the Telegraph, most people have a type of cell called CD4 T-cells that scan the body for invaders, and then release chemicals to attract immune cells to take out the disease.

The study followed seven supercentenarians (all who were 110 years-old or older), and found that a large number of their CD4 T-cells take up arms against body invaders, giving the immune system a huge boost. It was also found that they had about 25 per cent more CD4 T-cells,

## EDITORIAL: Trudeau's been keeping it serious so far in 2020



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau takes part in a news conference in Ottawa, Jan. 17, 2020. Blair Gable / Reuters

When Prime Minister Justin Trudeau returned from his extended holiday break vacation, observers instantly gravitated towards the beard.

We'd never seen it before. There was our typically youthful looking PM sporting a full beard. "What did it mean?!" analysts thundered, gathering to solve the latest Canadian politics mystery.

The more toned down musings pegged it that Trudeau simply hadn't shaved during vacation and would probably get around to it sooner or later. A reasonable guess, but apparently an incorrect one.

The beard remains. And, interestingly enough, so does the more sombre tone and more mature attitude.

We don't want to act like we've got completely fallen for the beard trap, but we will say that this new approach

suits Trudeau well.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

During his first term, Trudeau was verbose – excitedly saying whatever jumble of words came to mind and always eager to release a social media statement that fit with whatever was trending that day.

He seemed more interested in getting on the pages of glossy international magazines than in doing the less glamorous day-to-day duties of Canadian PM.

It remains to be seen exactly how much that has changed. But we do know we've seen a more subdued Trudeau since the October election and, even more so, since the year began a few weeks ago.

There is such a thing as being over exposed and Trudeau was very much in that category. Now he has wisely stepped back from the limelight.

Giving Chrystia Freeland the newly

empowered position of Deputy Prime Minister is an interesting one. She is considered a less divisive and more hardworking politician. That said, is it right that Trudeau is effectively ghosting away from his job and giving Freeland all of the heavy lifting?

It should also be noted that the main file Trudeau has faced this year is the tragedy of the Ukrainian airlines crash in Iran that saw dozens of Canadians killed. Trudeau has represented the country well through this difficult time and has kept up the pressure on Iran while offering assistance to the families of the deceased.

Let's hope he keeps up this more mature and serious approach throughout the year.

(January 26, 2020 Toronto SUN Opinion Editorials)

### LEVY: Life in an increasingly unsafe city

Diana was walking west along Adelaide St. towards University Ave. heading to work one morning during the Christmas break when she was attacked from behind.

She recalls feeling a punch to the left side of her head and when she fell, her attacker grabbed the hood of her coat and dragged her along the sidewalk.

As she lay there, Diana (not her real name) said her attacker appeared to be on drugs judging by the way he kept walking away.

"It was so sudden, he punched me, dragged me and took off," she said of the incident, which occurred at 7:30 a.m. while it was still dark.

One man, who helped her get up and made sure she was okay, told her he's seen the man before, that he's known in the area and has been witnessed behaving quite aggressively.

Toronto Police came to her office and interviewed her following the incident. But she said she's heard nothing since.

"I was traumatized for that whole day," she said last week. "It stays with you."

Diana contacted me recently to say the city she used to love is no longer safe. In fact, she says this incident has left her looking over her shoulder every time she walks down the street.

She places the blame squarely on the "hug-the-thug, drug addict-enabling system" put in place by Mayor John Tory and his left-wing pals at City Hall.

Diana feels the city's safe injection sites "normalizes the (drug addiction) problem."

"Thanks to their (Tory and council's) ridiculous ideas on how to run this city, obsession with virtue-signalling and endless catering to special interest groups instead of to law-abiding taxpayers, it (Toronto) is not a nice place anymore," she says.

Tory and his councillors just don't seem to give a damn about the fallout of their crazy enabling policies on ordinary taxpayers like Diana.

The residents of the Collier-Asquith neighbourhood living in the shadow of the 30-bed 21 Park Rd. respite shelter for more than two years have virtually given up trying to get City Hall or Margaret's (the operator) to address their concerns. (Continued...P-9)

## For Sonoko Sakai, working with your hands affects more than just the food you make

Our cookbook of the week is Japanese Home Cooking by teacher, noodle maker and grain activist Sonoko Sakai. To try a recipe from the book, check out: Chilled soba noodles with walnut dipping sauce, okonomiyaki (“as you like it”) pancakes with bonito flakes, and Japanese chicken curry with relish of the seven lucky gods.

“When you start putting your hands in flour, your sense of time and space changes,” writes Sonoko Sakai in Japanese Home Cooking (Roost Books, 2019). “You slow down.”

For the California-based cooking teacher and author, an appreciation of the downshift inherent in working with dough came a decade ago, when she started making noodles from scratch. A pursuit that began as a means of satisfying “a persistent, chronic kind of hunger” for the kind of noodles she couldn’t find in the U.S. became a desire to educate others about the value of heritage grains.

Japanese Home Cooking by Sonoko Sakai  
Japanese Home Cooking by Sonoko Sakai.  
Roost Books  
“As home cooks, we’re all part of the planet and we’re the ones who decide what we’re feeding our families. We’re the core of all things,” says Sakai. “That has become my main mission.

I make buckwheat noodles — soba noodles — because buckwheat is an underappreciated plant in this country, and also in Canada where it’s used mostly as a cover crop.”

Prior to devoting herself to grain activism and teaching Japanese cooking, Sakai worked in film. She explains that she has always admired people who work with their hands. But it was while producing a movie in a small village in Nagano, Japan that her respect for artisans took on new meaning, and ultimately propelled her career in a different direction. A carpenter working on Silk — the 2008 Canada/Italy/Japan co-production star-

ring Keira Knightley — invited Sakai to his house for soba noodles. His 83-year-old mother had undertaken every step of the process, from growing the buckwheat to grinding the grain into flour using a stone mill, and crafting the noodles by hand.

“She even caught the koi in the pond to make the fish dish. The pickles were also made with the vegetables that she grew. It was all within her means and sustainable, and the idea that in contrast, my life was about bringing snow equipment from Canada and getting all these exotic birds from different zoos in Japan,” Sakai recalls, laughing. “When I was watching her do this I thought,



we all have to go back to being a little bit closer to nature. I have to say, that was one of the reasons I wanted to somehow get my hands in buckwheat.”

Chilled soba noodles with walnut dipping sauce Chilled soba noodles with walnut dipping sauce from Japanese Home Cooking. Rick Poon Sakai features recipes for several different kinds of homemade noodles in Japanese Home Cooking — including soba — but the book, her third, encompasses a wealth of techniques and recipes beginning with the pantry (dashi, sea-

## Chinese citizens turn to virus tracker apps to avoid infected neighbourhoods

SHENZHEN — Chinese citizens are using mapping programs and travel trackers in a bid to avoid neighbourhoods with infections of the coronavirus and to better prepare for the dangers they face.

Both data mapping company QuantUrban and a third-party WeChat mini-program developer have created platforms that take official information on the neighbourhoods where confirmed cases live and map it geographically so that users can gauge how close they are to infection sites.

While the WeChat program, called “YiKuang” — or “Epidemic Situation,” covers the southern cities of Shenzhen and Guangzhou, QuantUrban’s browser-based maps also cover nine other cities in the province.

“Shenzhen might have a major outbreak in the next few days, and government data comes out slowly,” said April, a Shenzhen-based manager who declined to give her full name.

“Seeing the map is a psychological comfort. You can’t guarantee there won’t be fresh cases, but you can avoid an area that’s already hit,” she said.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

Confirmed cases in Shenzhen have climbed rapidly to 245 as of Monday, making the southern tech capital the worst-affected of China’s main cities — Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. It has a large population of migrant workers from the heavily affected central provinces

“We wanted to annotate the information on the map so that the public could better see how epidemic sites are distributed more intuitively, and also remind everyone to make adequate protection,” said Yuan Xiaohui, QuantUrban’s co-founder and CEO.

Volunteers also help the team to keep the map up to date as the government releases data daily, she said.

Yikuang also relies on volunteers to keep up to date and originally denoted neighbourhoods with confirmed cases with a skull and crossbones logo. It has since changed to less alarming exclamation points after users on social media platform Weibo complained they would cause panic.

“If I know that there are sick people nearby, I can take steps to be extra cautious,” Steven Liu, a finance student, told Reuters. “I live between Shenzhen and Guangzhou, and these maps are really great there.”

QuantUrban is also covering nine other cities in Guangdong province, Yuan said.

State-owned media CCTV and the People’s Daily have also given their endorsement to separate programs that help users track whether a bus, train or airplane they have travelled on was also used by a confirmed infected patient.

(February 3, 2020 Toronto SUN News World)

“Rather than just trying to convey a very authentic culinary culture, I wanted to share what we can do as a Japanese cook in a very diversified world ... I wanted to write about my grandmother’s practices because I didn’t want to forget — I think it was very important for me to preserve her ways and Japanese traditions. And then my mother, who was so flexible and adaptable — she was a lot more for being a little bit more convenient like using frozen foods and things like that. But then I looked at both, and I want to be right in the middle,” Sakai laughs. “So I got to benefit by their results.”

Laura Brehaut National Post  
February 6, 2020

# Strip Filmores off Toronto's list of naughty nightspots

The old bump and grind is about to bump and grind to a halt.

Toronto was stunned to hear that Filmores Hotel — location of one of the city's last strip clubs — is going to close in the near future.

Filmores has been sold to Menkes, who will develop the prime Dundas-Jarvis Sts. location; whether or not neighbours can expect another forest of high rise condos remains to be seen.

And there's no word yet as to whether some aspect of the heritage building facade will be incorporated into any new buildings.

According to city records, the storied Filmores was built on what was originally the setting for Henry Tasker's beautiful house, circa 1874. (There are still bits of Henry's house that have been absorbed into the Filmores building.)

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

Change began at the turn of the last century, and by 1914, the Wilton Court Apartments had been created on the lot. It became the Wilton Court Hotel not long afterward, and stayed that way until it became the Westover Hotel (around

1959). The building then be-

came Stage 212 in 1980. The night-spot was listed as an adult entertainment venue, and included a lesbian bar.

The location was named Filmores in 1985 and has been a strip club in the 35

years since.

Last Friday, it was announced that the building had been sold.

The announcement that Filmores would go the way of Jilly's, Remington's and the House of Lancaster (on the Queen-sway) shocked many of the current employees.

According to Sophia, a dancer at Filmores, it was an emotional day for many — but not a total surprise.

"We knew the building was being scoped out by condo developers. It was ripe for

development. Look at the location. We just didn't expect to hear this news today. Kind of a terrible way to find out you might be out of a job!

"Filmores is unique in Toronto," added Sophia. "It feels like a family. Some people have worked here for many years, and a few have worked here close to 30 years."

Strip clubs are becoming a thing of the past, as the Internet and other diversions make flesh-and-blood women dancing in erotic garb a thing of the past.

And it doesn't help that the city hasn't issued any new strip club licences in years.

"When one closes, that's it," lamented Sophia. "No new ones open. Tell your readers to check out Filmores while they can."

There is a silver lining, however. Filmores has taken a two-year lease on the building, so the club will not be shutting down tomorrow.

(February 3, 2020 6:17 AM EST Toronto SUN News Toronto & GTA)



## Francis Plummer, 'maverick' Canadian scientist who helped in fight against HIV, SARS, dead at 67



*'His contributions have had a cumulative global impact on saving the lives of tens of thousands of people for decades'*

WINNIPEG — The former scientific director of Canada's National Microbiology

Laboratory who had experimental brain surgery to battle alcoholism has died.

Dr. Francis (Frank) Plummer, a world-renowned microbiologist and infectious-disease expert, was 67.

"He was a scientific maverick," Theresa Tam, Canada's chief public health officer, tweeted on Tuesday.

Plummer was a mentor, she said, who helped set up and make the national laboratory in Winnipeg a world-class institution.

Plummer was at the helm of the lab during the SARS, influenza and H1N1 epidemics, as well as during the development of an Ebola vaccine.

Prior to his time at the lab, Plummer's research shaped public health policy around the world. He built a world-class research operation in Kenya, where he observed a particular group of women who had a natural immunity to HIV-1. That discovery provided important information for HIV vaccine and drug development.

Tackling our love affair with booze — from deep brain stimulation to 'Dry January' The story of 'the Canadian vaccine' that beat back Ebola

"He was admired and regarded highly by academics and researchers around the world, and his legacy of seeking to develop an HIV vaccine remains one of the landmarks of infectious disease prevention," University of Manitoba president David Barnard said in a statement.

"His contributions have had a cumulative global impact on saving the lives of tens of thousands of people for decades and also improving the lives of HIV positive people around the world," added DigiVir Jayas, the university's vice-president of research.

Plummer was named an Officer of the Order of Canada in 2006 and a member of the Order of Manitoba three years later. He received numerous prestigious awards throughout his career, including the Flavelle Medal from the Royal Society of Canada in 2018 for his contributions to biological science.

Plummer had recently shared his own battle with alcoholism.

"A family history of liver disease plus alcohol was my undoing," the renowned scientist wrote in a first-person essay released by Toronto's Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, the world's only centre currently testing deep brain stimulation for alcoholism, which afflicts more than one million Canadians in any given year.

Plummer explained how he began to drink scotch to "to celebrate, relax and deal with stress, anxiety, disappointment and grief."

He was admired and regarded highly by academics and researchers around the world (Continued...P-7)

# Pete Buttigieg leads Iowa caucuses as first results come in amid chaotic vote-counting delay

With 62% of precincts reporting, Bernie Sanders was a close second, while the results were a major setback for Joe Biden, who was in fourth behind Elizabeth Warren.

Pete Buttigieg led in the Iowa caucuses in initial results, cementing his status as a credible contender after an extraordinary rise from the little-known mayor of a small Indiana city to the top tier of the presidential race.

With 62% of precincts reporting, Bernie Sanders was a close second with his promises to deliver Medicare for All and lead a political revolution against wealth inequality.

The results were a major setback for Joe Biden, who was in fourth place behind Elizabeth Warren.

Addressing supporters in New Hampshire, the state with the next presidential contest, Buttigieg, 38, leaned into his relative youth, saying, “Every time that we have earned that Oval Office it has been with a candidate that’s focused on the future, new in politics, offering a different vision.”

On Monday night, the caucuses that were meant to give shape to the Democratic presidential race devolved into a political embarrassment for the party and left candidates and voters hanging with no results and no springboard into the next round of contests, including New Hampshire’s primary in seven days.

The chaos in Iowa began when an attempt to modernize the arcane caucus system and make it more transparent melted down with the introduction of new

technology and more complex rules. The Iowa Democratic Party said it was unable to release results from Monday’s caucuses after discovering “inconsistencies” in reporting from some precincts.

Among a field of experienced Washington lawmakers, Buttigieg’s lead in the developing Iowa vote count reflected a surprising success for a gay former mayor of a midsized Midwest city with a hard-to-pronounce name.

Buttigieg offers himself as a candidate for generational change. “I bring a different perspective,” the Afghanistan war veteran, who campaigns alongside his husband, said in a January debate in Des Moines.

The results in Iowa unraveled amid an uproar over the delayed vote count.

After virtual silence on Monday night, the state party said Tuesday morning that it had identified a flaw in the phone application used to report results that led to the failed vote tabulation.

“We determined with certainty that the underlying data collected via the app was sound,” Price, the state chairman, said in the statement. “While the app was recording data accurately, it was reporting out only partial data. We have determined that this was due to a coding issue in the reporting system. This issue was identified and fixed.”

The party’s clean-up efforts are unlikely to quiet critics.

In the void, several campaigns leaked unverified internal campaign data — submitted by their own precinct captains —

to claim a strong showing.

President Donald Trump on Tuesday morning claimed on Twitter that he was “the only person that can claim a very big victory in Iowa last night,” referring to the Republican caucuses where he easily triumphed. He called the Democratic results “an unmitigated disaster.”

The Iowa contest is the first in a long cycle of caucuses and primaries that stretches until June — awarding just 1% of the delegates needed to clinch the Democratic presidential nomination. But Iowa offers outsized momentum to its strong finishers as they headed to New Hampshire a week away.

The Iowa Democratic Party said there was no evidence of hacking in the stalled reporting of results, but rather human error and other inconsistencies that forced the party to resort to hand-counting the votes.

The state party deployed a new phone app for precinct chairmen to report results at the same time it deployed a new system for tabulating winners. Both appear to have failed.

Precinct chairmen found it difficult to use the app and instead resorted to calling a hotline. The hotline got so jammed up that they were waiting for 30 minutes or more for someone to answer. Then the party reported there were “inconsistencies” in the count and decided to withhold announcing results until at least Tuesday.

The disruption in the reporting is likely to accelerate calls for an end to caucuses. Only three other states — Nevada, Wyo-

oming and Kansas — still use the caucus system in the nomination race as the national party has tried to shift states toward using primaries.

The Iowa Democratic Party went into the 2020 caucuses touting a series of reforms intended to make the process more fair, accountable and transparent.

There are now three sets of results reported, allowing greater visibility into who participants supported in the first and second rounds, as supporters of candidates who don’t meet a 15% threshold are given a chance to join with backers of other candidates.

The party developed a smartphone app to expand the online reporting of results from precincts to party headquarters. And there’s a paper trail of presidential preference cards filled out by each caucus-goer, allowing the party to re-create the results even after the caucus ends.

But the rule changes created chaos and confusion.

The delay in reporting results followed complaints from some local party officials that they were struggling to use the new telephone application to report tallies from precincts.

The party first used a smartphone application to report results in 2016, but before then, all results were submitted by phoning them in.

## Francis Plummer...

(Continuation P-6.)

After decades of drinking, attempts at quitting and a liver transplant, Plummer decided to become the first patient to get the experimental treatment using deep brain stimulation at Sunnybrook in December 2018.

“Having committed my career to medical science and human health I saw this study as one more way to make a contribution — this time, literally using my brain!” Plummer wrote.

After the procedure he found he no longer craved alcohol, although he said he still had a bit to drink.

“I maybe have two or three drinks if I do

drink,” he said in an interview with the National Post. “And I can stop.”

That was a huge difference for him. He said that when things got “really bad” for him after leaving the national microbiology lab in Winnipeg, he’d drink in the morning and could polish off 20 ounces of scotch a night.

“It got to be the main focus of my life,” he said. And so the scientist went in search of a more “robust” medical solution which he found at Sunnybrook.

Frank Plummer was addicted to alcohol and “waiting to die” until he underwent highly experimental deep brain stimulation treatment. Kevin Van Paassen, Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre

Afterwards, he said his life totally changed and that alcohol didn’t interest him.

“My life is full of lots of other things than alcohol,” he said, adding he was writing a book and liked taking his dog out for walks and cooking.

Finally Plummer said he was “just enjoying life for the first time in a very long time.”

Keith Fowke, head of medical microbiology and infectious diseases at the University of Manitoba, said Plummer always wanted to help people.

“He was always focused on truth and knowledge and making the world a better place,” said Fowke, who studied under Plummer and later became a close friend and colleague.

Fowke described his friend as warm and kind. He called Plummer a loving father and husband who enjoyed having his friends over for dinner.

“He wanted everyone to know he was a proud Winnipegger and a proud Canadian, and that all of us can make important globally significant contributions.”

(The Canadian Press  
Kelly Geraldine Malone  
February 4, 2020)

## Rex Murphy: The Democrats' Iowa debacle: What a mess. And no Russians involved



*It was the most extravagantly amateur, blundering, messed-up calamity of a major political event in modern times*

For nearly three years the Democratic party has twisted itself into knots trying to explain away Donald Trump's victory in the '16 election. The excuses have been limitless, from Hillary Clinton's complaint that voters were not yet willing for a woman to win, to the grand theory that it was all "Russian interference."

Out of the Russian interference conspiracy theory, and the Democrats' stubborn refusal to accept Trump's legitimate win, grew the impeachment process. That wary effort has clogged the American political system since the day after the vote. After all the sound and fury (Wednesday is the very last day of this interminable mess, when the Senate will vote to acquit) it has actually done more political damage to the perpetually irate Democrats than the Republicans or their leader.

The ability of the Democratic party, amounting to a kind of eagerness, to wound itself cannot be underestimated. For over two years it salivated over the impeccable Robert Mueller investigation, which was surely going to prove beyond all question that the dread Russians, Vladimir Putin and his gang, had worked (colluded was the word) with the nefarious Trump to "steal" the election. It was going to bring him down for sure. And then Mueller stumblingly reported in person to Congress that there was nothing. Not a single American, not a single person on the Trump campaign, not Trump himself had colluded.

The ability of the Democratic party, amounting to a kind of eagerness, to

wound itself cannot be underestimated

Mueller was a dud for the Democrats. Impeachment was a lead sinker. Russian collusion was a phantom and a farce. Most of the Democrats' deepest problem lies with their own party, their own strategists, and — let us turn now to Monday night's first major event of the 2020 campaign — their startling incapacity,

a near-fatal incompetence, in the management of their own business.

Monday evening was supposed to be a big Hallelujah night for the Democrats. It was going to showcase their new fervour and enthusiasm for 2020. It had great promise for Bernie Sanders. It was going to highlight how some of the new faces — Pete Buttigieg, Elizabeth Warren and Amy Klobuchar — were moving the dial. It had suspense: would Joe Biden, the "moderate" hope of the Democratic establishment, have a bad evening? This was a prime-time debut for the campaign.

Well, it was a big night. It was the most extravagantly amateur, blundering, messed-up calamity of a major political event in modern times. As all the big American networks prepared for the great drama of the start of the 2020 campaign, anchors and pundits eager to unload their great stock of insights over who would win and lose, to tell if Biden was in a fix, and Sanders about to unloose his legions and trample the field, time stood still.

There were no results in the first hour. In the second. In the third, and so on till I scribble on Tuesday morning. They couldn't count the votes. Their "app" was a bungle. As Monday night progressed, the poor candidates and their managers grew more and more impatient, more and more angry.

There was talk of a "fix," of efforts, like in 2016, of the establishment Democrats once more seeking to smother Sanders. Those counting the votes in various precincts tried phoning campaign central to report and found themselves on hold — for 90 minutes to two hours! — only to be hung up on. One guy phoned Wolf Blitzer

## 14 students die in stampede at primary school in west Kenya

NAIROBI, Kenya - A stampede at a primary school in western Kenya after students were let out to go home has killed 14 children and wounded 39 others, officials said Monday.

The cause of the crush is not yet clear, but Kakamega area regional commissioner Anne Ngetich ruled out that a "scare" had sparked the stampede.

"I know there are people who might think these children always use the same entrance and exits, what might have happened today? Was there an explosion?" she said. "No there was nothing, nothing physical that we have established."

Grief-stricken parents wailed and collapsed at the three hospitals where the bodies of the dead and injured were taken.

According to the school, the children were heading home when the stampede occurred. David Kabena, the police in charge of Kakamega central

area, gave the casualty figures. An investigation is underway.

Former prime minister Raila Odinga commented on the tragedy.

"My heartfelt condolences to parents who have lost loved ones in the unfortunate and regrettable tragedy at Kakamega Primary School. I wish a quick recovery to the injured children and pray that God grant strength to the affected families," said Odinga on Twitter.

Safety in school has become a major concern for Kenyan parents. Last year Kenyan media reported two deaths from what appeared to be negligence by the schools and the disappearance of two other students. In September seven primary school students died when their school, which was on a rickety structure, collapsed.

By Tom OdulaThe Associated Press - Mon., Feb. 3, 2020

### Rex Murphy..

of CNN and was on air when the campaign finally answered — and then as Blitzer tried to hold him on air — lost the connection.

It was as if Abbott and Costello had been summoned from their sweet rest in the afterlife to take over the handling of Democratic campaign for president. Twitter was a forest fire of mockery and condemnation. By late evening, from Fox to MSNBC, even the deep-furrowed brows of the most sage pundits were unfurled in laughter and incredulity.

*"Even the deep-furrowed brows of the most sage pundits were unfurled in laughter and incredulity"*

Politico's headline was bitingly succinct: "It's a total meltdown." Probably the most wounding summary, and the most telling, was this one: "The real winner tonight was Donald Trump, who got to watch his opponents wallow in a mess. A lot of good Democratic candidates and people who fought their hearts out here for ... nothing." Even some delegates gave furious vent over all their efforts being sidelined and mauled: "This was the most unorga-

nized mess I've ever been to in my whole entire life." Where there wasn't pure anger there was delicious sarcasm: "Any word on whether @realDonaldTrump will send in FEMA to handle the Iowa Caucus Disaster?"

And so it went. Amid the recriminations, sinister theories, disillusionment and disappointment there was one bright light. No one was blaming the Russians. The Iowa caucuses were a Putin-free environment. No talk of foreign involvement. There was not even some fallback on a possible Ukraine link. No. This Custer's last stand of a Democratic event was entirely an accomplishment, unaided by any other, of the Democrats themselves. There will be no effort by Adam Schiff to add the Iowa caucuses to Donald Trump's "high crimes and misdemeanours."

Finally, what perfect timing. Tuesday night, Trump delivers the State of the Union address. Wednesday he gets acquitted on the impeachment motion. Either the political gods are smiling on him, or — may the heavens fall — some Democrats are colluding with Trump.

Nationalpost.  
Rex Murphy February 4, 2020  
3:01 PM EST



# Federal Court dismisses First Nations' challenges to TMX pipeline project

OTTAWA — The Federal Court of Appeal has dismissed legal objections to Ottawa's decision to approve the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion a second time.

In a 3-0 decision, the court rejected four challenges from First Nations in British Columbia to the approval, which were filed last summer. The 95-page ruling says there is no legal basis to interfere with the federal cabinet's approval of the project.

That means construction can continue on the project, though the First Nations have 60 days to appeal to the Supreme Court.

Natural Resources Minister Seamus O'Regan said the government welcomes the ruling and believes it proves that if consultations and reviews are done properly, major projects can be built in Canada.

"This has worked out well," he said.

"The courts have acknowledged that we listened and that we want to do things right."

Chief Lee Spahan of the Coldwater Indian Band said in a statement an appeal to the Supreme Court is under consideration. He also said his band must still be consulted on the route the expansion will take, with the approved route passing an aquifer that is the only source of drinking water for 320 people living on the main Coldwater reserve.

The band wants the route moved away from the aquifer.

The cabinet originally approved the expansion project, to twin the existing pipeline, in November 2016. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said at the time it was in Canada's national interest to build the project, which will provide oilsands producers more transportation capacity to get their products to market.

That approval was overturned by the

Federal Court of Appeal in August 2018, citing an insufficient consultation process with Indigenous communities and a failure to properly take into account the potential impact on marine life from additional oil tankers off the B.C. coast. Ottawa then launched another round of consultations with Indigenous communities and asked the National Energy Board to look at marine life.

In June 2019, cabinet issued its second approval for the project. Following that, the Coldwater Indian Band, Squamish



Nation, Tsleil-Waututh and a group of small First Nations in the Fraser Valley asked the court to review the decision a second time. The court refused to hear a challenge from environment groups seeking a review of the decision on environmental grounds but agreed to go ahead with the First Nations case.

In a December hearing, lawyers for the bands argued the government went into the new consultations having predetermined the outcome.

But the judges said "this was anything but a rubber-stamping exercise."

"The end result was not a ratification of the earlier approval, but an approval with amended conditions flowing directly from the renewed consultations," the ruling said.

The judges found the government made a genuine effort, listened to and considered concerns raised by First Nations, and sometimes agreed to accommodate those concerns, "all very much consistent with the concepts of reconciliation and the honour of the Crown."

They also say while it is true not all the concerns raised were accommodated, "to insist on that happening is to impose a standard of perfect," that is not required by law.

"We particularly appreciate the clarity in the decision that the duty to consult does not equal a veto," Alberta Premier Jason Kenney said in a statement. He said most Canadians and most First Nations "want to share in the economic benefits of responsible resource development" and "it's time to get this pipeline built."

O'Regan acknowledged there will be people unhappy with the court's judgment and any outstanding concerns they have will not be ignored.

"I want to say clearly to those who are disappointed with today's court decision: we see you and we hear you," he said. "As construction continues to move forward we will take every step that we can to ensure that this project moves forward in the right way."

The expansion project would triple the capacity of the existing pipeline between Edmonton and a shipping terminal in Burnaby, B.C., with the new pipeline carrying mainly diluted bitumen for export.

It has become a political challenge for Trudeau as he insists Canada can continue to expand oil production and still meet its commitments to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

Trudeau's government bought the existing pipeline and the expansion plan in 2018 after political opposition to the project from the B.C. government caused Kinder Morgan Canada to pull out from building the expansion. The government intends to finish the expansion and then sell both the existing pipeline and the expansion back to the private sector.

It has been in talks with some Indigenous communities about the sale but Finance Minister Bill Morneau has said the project won't be sold until all the risks about proceeding are eliminated. Those risks include this court case.

Morneau said Tuesday the government still expects about \$500 million in revenues each year once the pipeline is up and running, all of which will be put towards clean technology and energy projects.

(Continuation - P-1)

**Expect more Bloor bike lanes..**  
department spokesman Eric Holmes. At the first of two "public consultations" Monday night — which didn't offer an opportunity to consult at all — a series of story boards confirmed that 235 parking spaces will be removed.

## Life in an increasingly...

(Continuation - P-4)

Mike Bradley, treasure of the Asquith-Collier Association, says they've installed all manner of security equipment at their own expense — cameras, lights, locked gates and other locks—whatever it takes to feel more comfortable in their homes.

He says guns have been waved at residents in back alleys and there have been "so many instances" of residents being harassed by strung-out people that his neighbours are "fearful" to take the short walk to the Bloor-Yonge subway entrance.

He's actually taken to meeting his 12-year-old at the subway after school to walk him home.

"It's unnerving," he said. "Drugs, disturbed people and people waving guns were not in our neighbourhood before ... now we have to be extra careful."

John Potter, who also sits on the board of the Asquith-Collier Association, says a neighbour recently posted a warning on the association's Facebook page to watch out for an extremely aggressive 20 to 30-year-old who had knocked on her door wanting to come in.

He said Margaret's and the city have tried to clean up the drug paraphernalia but can't keep up with the plethora of needles, garbage and human waste that has been dropped in the alleyways in between their homes.

Businesses like Hudson's Bay have also put up fencing and locked their entrances at 10 p.m. to keep out vagrants.

"The security costs for the local businesses have gone through the roof," he said. "Now there's a very visible presence of security at all times at Hudson's Bay and the shops along Bloor St."

There's always a tremendous social cost, he said, contending far too many families with children have up and left their neighbourhood since the shelter was created.

Sue-Ann Levy - Toronto Sun  
February 8, 2020

February 4, 2020 3:58 PM EST - Toronto SUN News

## EU signals willingness to ease Greek budget targets

**A**THENS, Greece - The European Union's new economy commissioner says Greece's bailout lenders are willing to discuss a request by Athens to ease strict budget targets that would help speed up the country's recovery.

While visiting Athens Thursday, Paolo Gentiloni said discussions could begin as soon as next month to ease the targets that were imposed to ensure Greece continues with its cost-cutting reforms and repays rescue loans provided between 2010 and 2018 by other eurozone members and the International Monetary Fund.

Gentiloni, who assumed office on Dec. 1, said the Commission was waiting for the results of an inspection into Greece's public finances carried out last month in conjunction with the European Central Bank, a eurozone bailout fund, and the IMF.

"I think that there are all the (right) conditions to have a good report, and a good report could pave the way to decisions, and also to open the discussion about the possibility to change our targets on surplus," Gentiloni, a former Italian prime minister, told reporters in Athens.

As part of its commitments to bailout lenders, Greece has pledged to maintain a high primary budget surplus — the annual state balance before debt servicing costs — worth 3.5% of annual GDP through 2022.

But the Greek centre-right government wants to lower that target, starting next year, arguing that the country can now tap bond markets at historically-low interest rates as its credit rating approaches investment grade.

Bailout lenders had previously been re-

luctant to discuss Athens' request, fearing it could undermine the country's reform commitment and ability to repay bailout loans as Greece struggles with a massive national debt of around 180% of GDP.

Christos Staikouras, the Greek finance minister, said the commissioner's remarks were a vote of confidence in the seven-month old pro-reform government.

"We are regaining confidence at home and abroad ... the economy is improving and stabilizing," Staikouras said. "Greece is returning to normal." \_\_\_ Follow Gatopoulos at <https://twitter.com/dgatopoulos> and Nedeljkovic at <https://twitter.com/SrdjanTV>

By Derek Gatopoulos And Srdjan  
<https://www.thestar.com/NedeljkovicTheAssociatedPress>  
Thu., Feb. 6, 2020

## We know the secret to living past 100...

(Continuation P-3.)

"We believe that these type of cells, which are relatively uncommon in most individuals, even the young, are useful for fighting against established tumours, and could be important for immuno-surveillance. This is exciting as it has given us new insights into how people who live very long lives are able to protect themselves from conditions such as infections and cancer."

Next, researchers want to find out how and why supercentenarians have these special cells, and if it can be replicated to extend life and boost health.

## Brawl breaks out as Ukraine's lawmakers debate land reform

**M**INSK, Belarus - Ukraine's parliament is debating a proposed law to allow sales of the country's rich farmland, a high-tension issue that sparked a brawl among lawmakers Thursday.

Proponents say that allowing sales of farmland that are currently outlawed would significantly boost Ukraine's struggling economy. Opponents argue the land could end up in the hands of businesses that would crush small farmers or

of foreigners, including Russians.

President Volodymyr Zelenskiy, who supports land sales, says the question of allowing foreign ownership should be put to a referendum.

Hundreds of protesters gathered outside the parliament building during the debate. Inside the chamber, supporters of opposition leader Yulia Tymoshenko blocked the area at the front while she occupied the speaker's seat. The con-

frontation ended in a scuffle.

About 75% of Ukraine's farmland belongs to small landowners who can lease it but not sell it. The rest is owned by the state.

Debate of the measure is likely to be lengthy because lawmakers have proposed some 4000 amendments to it.

By The Associated Press -  
Thu., Feb. 6, 2020  
<https://www.thestar.com/>

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## Toronto house prices are expected to soar by nearly 10 percent in 2020 and rents will jump up too

Any lingering concerns that the mortgage stress test and new taxes put the Toronto housing market into a deep sleep can now be laid to rest, says the Toronto Regional Real Estate Board (TRREB).

Instead, the board is predicting a double-digit climb in sales and prices this year that will boost the average cost of a resale home up nearly 10 per cent to \$900,000 compared to last year's average of \$819,319.

Last year saw a 12 per cent growth in the average home price compared to 2018 and the board is warning that in the year ahead, buyers are going to face increased competition for a flat or declining number of listings.

"It's an issue because 10 per cent price growth year over year isn't sustainable," said Jason Mercer, the real estate board's chief market analyst.

"It's also clear that niggling around the edges with policies like we've seen in 2017 and 2018 is only a temporary fix. We have a regional economy that continues to attract people from all over the world and they need a place to live.

"So the demand over the long term for ownership housing is going to remain strong," Mercer told a banquet hall of real estate industry professionals at the board's annual economic summit where it releases its Market Year in Review and 2020 Outlook report. "We need to start moving toward policies that are bringing more supply online."

Mercer told the crowd that "last year's (average) price of \$820,000 is almost back to the peak that we hit in 2016 and 2017. Certainly as we move forward we'll be setting new records as we move into 2020."

The sales growth reflects a trend to less expensive home types — condos and lowrise formats such as semi-detached and townhouses. But if the action accelerates in the detached housing segment, which showed a marked recovery

last year, this year's price average will be even closer to the \$1 million mark, said the board.

Home sales, which continued to show year-over-year gains through the traditionally slower months of December and January, are expected to continue climbing by 10.5 per cent this year to 90,000 — again driven by condos and attached houses.

TRREB's report says that the strong sales should, in theory, have prompted more people to list their homes and cash out their equity.

But with the exception of a brief spike in 2017, listings have been persistently flat or down. New listings fell 2.4 per cent year over year in 2019.

The board blames a number of policies, including the introduction of a municipal land transfer tax in Toronto that means many homeowners have chosen to renovate rather than buy up, and the lack of less expensive "missing middle" lowrise homes that give condo owners a move-up choice. Selling prices rose by 10.5 per cent year over year in January across the region to an average of \$747,175 — including all condos and house types.

In the City of Toronto, where real estate agents are reporting increasingly competitive conditions, prices rose 12.3 per cent year over year.

Detached house sales grew 23.3 per cent in the GTA in January and prices climbed 10.5 per cent year over year. Condo prices rose 15.1 per cent to an average of \$630,047 last month.

While sales of all housing types — condos, towns, semis and detached — climbed 15.4 per cent year over year in January, the number of new listings declined 17.1 per cent and the number of active listings dropped 35 per cent.

Ipsos research showed that the number of owners who expect to list their homes for sale this year was about 14 per cent — about the same as the last

three years.

"But flat intentions is still growth because of population growth. If we're expecting 30,000 or 40,000 new households, even if the existing base is flat, the trajectory on demand should still be up," said Sean Simpson, Ipsos vice-president.

Tenants can expect to see above-inflation rent increases for one- and two-bedroom condos. The rent for a one-bedroom condo last year was \$2,201, up 5.4 per cent from 2018, when rents increased 9.9 per cent year over year. A two-bedroom condo rented for \$2,874 on average, a 4.5 per cent yearly growth rate that was also lower than the 7.9 per cent increase between 2017 and 2018.

That's likely due to the increase in the number of available units, which increased by more than 20 per cent at some points last year.

- 87 per cent of home buyers were confident they could afford their payments if mortgage rates rose 2 points.
- While 42 per cent of home buyers were first-time purchasers last year — up from 38 per cent in 2018 — that still represents a marked decline from 2016 when 53 per cent of home consumers were first-time purchasers.
- Only 42 per cent of buyers said they were likely to purchase a detached home last year. That is down from 54 per cent in 2015.

*These findings are from the Ipsos Home Owners survey in November, which looked at the buying and selling intentions of 2,500 GTA homeowners who purchased in the 12 months leading up to the survey. It is considered accurate within 2 per cent.*

By Tess Kalinowski Real Estate Reporter - <https://www.thestar.com/> Thu., Feb. 6, 2020

### James Forcillo, officer..

The two-member board panel said Forcillo, 37, no longer requires ongoing psychological counselling, which had been a condition of his day parole. But it renewed a restriction barring him from contacting any of the victim's relatives, in order to "prevent any further trauma" to the grieving family of Sammy Yatim.

"Your actions took the life of a much-loved son, brother, and member of the community. His loss continues to devastate the family. You acknowledge the trauma that you have caused the victim's family and that you continue to reflect upon the harm that your actions caused," the panel wrote.

"With the benefit of counselling, you now understand that your own fear, impulsivity, and stress contributed to your poor decision-making, poor problem-solving, and resulted in fatal consequences. As a result, you are now more cautious of the impact of your decisions and are better able to consider the consequences of your actions."

Forcillo was convicted in 2016 of attempted murder in the shooting of Yatim, who was 18. He was later convicted of perjury for claiming to be living with his ex-wife while on bail awaiting his appeal, when he had in fact moved in with his new fiancée. He was sentenced to a total of 6 1/2 years behind bars for both offences.

The parole board panel said there was no indication Forcillo breached the conditions of his day parole since his release last summer, which it said was "reflective of an offender with high levels of motivation, accountability, and reintegration potential."

The former officer's attitude improved during his incarceration and he now shows "no immediate need" in that area, the panel wrote.

It also said Forcillo has taken steps to balance his work life and his responsibilities at home, something it said he struggled with in the time leading up to the shooting.

"As you are now aware that a balanced lifestyle is ... necessary in ensuring your safe reintegration, you are focused on maintaining a healthy and balanced lifestyle. In particular, you spend your free time studying or attending the gym on campus," it wrote, adding Forcillo has also maintained relationships with his children.

Forcillo is now enrolled in a full-time college program with the goal of becoming an electrician, (Continued...P-12)

### James Forcillo, officer who fatally shot teen Sammy Yatim on Toronto streetcar, gets full parole

Forcillo was acquitted of second-degree murder, but convicted of attempted murder for his second volley of shots which came as Yatim was down and dying

TORONTO — A police officer who fatally shot a distraught teenager on an empty Toronto streetcar more than six years ago has been granted full

parole, with officials noting his progress reintegrating into society.

In a written decision released Tuesday,

the Parole Board of Canada said James Forcillo is a low risk for reoffending and has shown a high level of motivation and accountability while on day parole.

**James Forcillo, officer...**

(Continuation P-11.)

the document said.

“Your success and high marks demonstrate your motivation and commitment to your chosen field,” it said.

Forcillo was one of the first officers to arrive at the scene in the summer of 2013, after someone reported that a teen was exposing himself on the streetcar while brandishing a small knife. By then, Yatim was the only person left on the streetcar.

Forcillo was the only officer to open fire, firing three shots that caused Yatim to fall to the floor of the streetcar, followed by a second volley of six more shots. Another officer then Tasered the teen.

A jury acquitted Forcillo in 2016 of second-degree murder in Yatim’s death, but convicted him of attempted murder in connection with the second volley, which came as Yatim was down and dying.

His lawyers appealed the conviction, arguing the first and second volleys the officer fired were artificially divided into discrete events. They also sought to challenge his initial six-year sentence, which was a year longer than the mandatory minimum.

Ontario’s highest court rejected the appeal, and the Supreme Court of Canada declined to hear the case.

**LEVY: Teacher unions employ same tactics as 23 years ago**

The latest attempts by officials with the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario (ETFO) to dial up the volume or their labour dispute by engaging in province-wide strikes brought me back to 1997.

I was the Toronto Sun’s education reporter on Oct. 27, 1997 when 126,000 teachers left their classrooms to protest on the front lawn of Queen’s Park against cuts to education by then-premier Mike Harris.



peace with teachers before she went to the polls, former premier Kathleen Wynne extended teacher contracts for two years in 2017, giving them 4% wage hikes — plus a 0.5% lump sum payment and a 4% bump to their generous benefits packages.

Those increases brought the highest paid teachers up to \$100,034 by Aug. 31 of last year.

Don’t forget, that’s for less than 10 months of work.

This is not all about teacher-bashing.

I have tremendous respect for teachers who, courtesy of weak virtue-signalling trustees and board bureaucrats, are trying to cope with a myriad of issues that impact on their abilities to teach.

There’s a growing epidemic of violence in the classrooms. Some students feel they are entitled to say whatever they so choose (including obscenities) to their teachers — a state of affairs enabled by principals and bureaucrats, and parents who are either not engaged or believe their little darlings don’t need to be disciplined for bad behaviour.

I’ve talked to many teachers who spend half their class time just trying to deal with discipline issues.

Nope. I’m calling out the teacher unions which appear to enjoy picking fights with whatever government is in power if they don’t get what they want.

I’ve written about enough teacher issues to know that when push comes to shove and teachers are either placed on leave for trying to discipline a disrespectful student or, in worst-case scenarios, assaulted by students, the unions are conspicuously absent. The general consensus from the teachers I’ve spoken with is that their unions are useless.

I guess that’s because unions like ETFO — and make no mistake, the others follow

in lockstep — are too busy either throwing temper tantrums or trying to indoctrinate their members to become social justice warriors.

In other words, they don’t seem to believe that actually protecting members is their mandate.

For example ETFO is holding a series of equity workshops for its members this year.

The themes of these workshops include understanding anti-black racism, learning about the experiences of racialized educators, building awareness about Islamophobia, busting myths about Indigenous peoples and — get this — rethinking white privilege.

ETFO even provides white privilege lesson plans.

Like many unions in Canada, Ontario’s teacher unions have become completely disconnected from the real needs of their members.

Their demands are tiresome and frankly, plain childish.

That’s why I have all the respect in the world for governments who stand up to their nonsense.

Here are the teacher strikes planned for this week:

Feb. 10: Elementary teachers (ETFO) to hold one-day strike at Durham District Board and Halton District Board.

Feb. 11: Elementary teachers (ETFO) to hold a province-wide strike.

Feb. 12: Elementary teachers (ETFO) to hold one-day strike at the Toronto District School Board. Early child educators to walk off the job at the Toronto Catholic District School Board.

Feb. 13: Elementary teachers (ETFO) on strike at Peel District School Board and York Region District School Board. High school teachers (OSSTF) to walk off the job at Peel District School Board and eight other boards in Ontario. All French language teachers (AEFO) to engage in a province-wide strike.

Feb. 14: No strike action planned but it is a PA day for all students with the Toronto public and Catholic school boards.

Sue-Ann Levy  
February 9, 2020  
Toronto SUN

off the job yet again, just as they did last week.

Over what?

The province-wide strike of 1997 was all about protecting public education and about the kids — as it supposedly is now.

The education file was bloated, school trustees were useless (many used the job as a stepping stone to loftier political ambitions) and teacher unions, headed by overpaid militants, believed they were untouchable in 1997.

Nothing much has changed in 23 years.

Most teachers, other than the more entitled, just wanted to do the job for which they hired back then — as they do now.

And the kids? They’ve been the pawns of these loudmouth militants for the past 23 years.

For heaven’s sake, nothing seems to please them except more money, more members to bolster their war chests and power.

Let’s not forget that to try to buy labour

# Murder probe sought for Christian sect at centre of Seoul coronavirus outbreak

SEOUL/BEIJING — South Korea sought murder charges against leaders of a secretive church at the center of a ballooning coronavirus outbreak in the country on Monday as the global death toll rose above 3,000.

World stock markets regained some calm as hopes for global interest rate cuts to soften the economic blow of the virus steadied nerves after last week's worst plunge since the 2008 financial crisis.

South Korea reported 599 new coronavirus cases, taking its national tally to 4,335, following the country's biggest daily jump on Saturday of 813 confirmed infections.

There were 586 more on Sunday, broadening the largest virus outbreak outside China. There have been 26 deaths in total.

Worldwide, the death toll has risen to 3,044, according to Reuters figures.

Of the new cases in South Korea, 377 were from the south-eastern city of Daegu, home to a branch of the Shincheonji Church of Jesus, to which most of South Korea's cases have been traced.

The agency said that in January some members of the church visited the central Chinese city of Wuhan, where the disease emerged late last year.

The Seoul government asked prosecutors to launch a murder investigation into leaders of the church, a movement that reveres founder Lee Man-hee.

Seoul Mayor Park Won-soon said that if Lee and other heads of the church had cooperated, preventive measures could have saved the people who died.

"The situation is this serious and urgent, but where are the leaders of the Shincheonji, including Lee Man-hee, the chief director of this crisis?" Park said in a post on his Facebook page late on Sunday.

Seoul's city government said it had filed a criminal complaint with the Seoul Central District Prosecutors' Office, asking for an investigation of Lee and 12 others on charges of murder and disease control act violations.

Lee apologized on Monday that one of its members had infected many others,

"The rapid rising trend of virus cases in Wuhan has been controlled," Mi Feng, a spokesman for China's National Health Commission, told a briefing.

"Outbreaks in Hubei outside of Wuhan are curbed and provinces outside of Hubei are showing a positive trend."

The global spread has forced the postponement of festivals, exhibitions, trade fairs and sports events, crippled tourism, retail sales and global supply chains, especially in China, the world's second-largest economy.

Retail sales in Chinese-ruled Hong Kong, already rocked by months of often violent anti-government unrest, fell 21.4% in January from a year earlier.

Middle East airlines have lost an estimated \$100 million so far due to the outbreak and governments should help the carriers through this "difficult period," an official of the International Air Transport Association (IATA) said.

Global airlines stand to lose \$1.5 billion this year due to the virus, he said.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development warned that the outbreak was pitching the world economy into its worst downturn since the global financial crisis, urging governments and central banks to fight back.

Officials in U.S. President Donald Trump's administration on Sunday tried to calm market panic that the coronavirus could cause a global recession, saying the U.S. public had over-reacted and that stocks would rebound due to the American economy's underlying strength.

The S&P 500 index tumbled 11.5% last week. Roughly \$4 trillion has been wiped off the value of U.S. stocks.

Speaking to NBC's "Meet the Press" on Sunday, Vice President Mike Pence, who is leading the administration's response to the virus, said the market "will come back."

"The fundamentals of this economy are strong. We just saw some new numbers come out in housing and consumer confidence and business optimism. Unemployment is at a 50-year low. More Americans are working than ever before," Pence said.

Published: March 2, 2020  
Toronto SUN



This photo taken on March 1, 2020 shows Kim Shin-chang, director of international missions at the Shincheonji Church of Jesus, wearing a face mask as he speaks during an interview with AFP at the headquarters of the church in Gwacheon, south of Seoul. JUNG YEON-JE / AFP via Getty Images

calling the epidemic a "great calamity."

"We did our best but was not able to stop the spread of the virus," Lee told reporters.

It was not immediately known how many of South Korea's dead were directly connected to the church. Wuhan, the Chinese city at the center of the epidemic, closed the first of 16 specially built hospitals, hurriedly put up to treat people with the virus, after it discharged its last recovered patients, state broadcaster CCTV said on Monday.

'OUTBREAKS ARE CURBED'

News of the closure coincided with a steep fall in new cases in Hubei province, but China remained on alert for people returning home with the virus from other countries.

The virus broke out in Wuhan late last year and has since infected more than 86,500 people, the majority in China, with most in Hubei.

Outside China, it has in recent days spread rapidly, now to 53 countries, with more than 6,500 cases and more than 100 deaths. Italy has 1,694 cases, the vast majority in the wealthy northern regions of Lombardy, Veneto and Emilia Romagna.

Iran's number of reported cases rose to 1,501 on Monday, with 66 deaths.

Global factories took a beating in February from the outbreak, with activity in China shrinking at a record pace, surveys showed on Monday, raising the prospect of a coordinated policy response by central banks to prevent a global recession.

## 'Judge Judy' ending after 25 seasons; Judy Sheindlin announces new show



Popular U.S. courtroom TV show Judge Judy is set to end after 25 seasons.

The show debuted in 1996, and Judge Judy Sheindlin has presided over the courtroom ever since, overseeing civil cases with maximum damages of \$5,000.

Speaking during an appearance on The Ellen DeGeneres Show to be broadcast on Monday, however, the star confirmed the Daytime Emmy award-winning show had been axed, and will come to an end after its 2020-2021 season.

"CBS (which syndicates the show) sort of felt, I think, they wanted to optimally utilize the repeats of my program," the 77-year-old shared. "Now they have 25 years of my reruns. What they decided to do is sell a couple of years' worth of reruns."

However, Judy insisted retirement isn't an option, as she announced that she has a new show, Judy Justice, in the works, which "will be coming out a year later."

"Judge Judy, you'll be able to see next year — a full year, all new shows. The following couple of years, you should be able to get all the reruns that CBS has sold on the stations currently carrying Judge Judy, and Judy Justice will be going elsewhere," she confirmed, adding, "Isn't that fun?" Toronto Sun - Published: March 2, 2020 Toronto SUN

# YOUR AD- VERTISE- MENT

## OPINION: Ottawa's carbon tax dealt a huge blow in Alberta

Taxpayers have won a huge victory in Alberta as the province's court of appeal found Ottawa's heavy-handed carbon tax to be unconstitutional.

The court's finding that the federal Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act tramples on provincial jurisdiction — going as far to describe it as a "Trojan horse" that "substantially overrides" several parts of the constitution — is a serious blow to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government.



Alberta's court decision follows similar challenges in Saskatchewan and Ontario that resulted in split-decisions upholding the carbon tax, confirming that there are strong legal arguments against the federal carbon tax.

It also marks the third time judges have flagged jurisdictional concerns. In Ontario, the dissenting judge made clear that he found the federal carbon tax to be an unconstitutional invasion of provincial powers, wondering whether it could open the door to Ottawa interfering in other inappropriate ways. In Saskatchewan, the two dissenting judges even labelled the Trudeau carbon tax "constitutionally repugnant." Alberta's court ruling builds on both of these positions and adds to the momentum taxpayers are taking into the Supreme Court case that is expected this March.

This is a significant shift on the legal front. When the carbon tax issue first started winding through the courts, carbon tax advocates were dismissive. But constitutional experts, such as University of Saskatchewan professor Dwight Newman, suggested the odds were closer than many expected. Close indeed. A total of 15 judges have now weighed in on the constitutionality of the federal carbon tax

with eight ruling in favour and seven ruling against.

A new legal reality is now inescapably clear: it's possible the Supreme Court could strike down the federal carbon tax.

While the legal tide looks to be turning, the political current is also flowing against the carbon tax. Voters have opposed carbon taxes in provincial elections and even the federal election resulted in the government losing votes and seats. It's easy to see why: Ottawa's carbon tax has always been more about taxing Canadians rather than protecting the environment.

Canadians need look no further than British Columbia to see how a carbon tax has been successful at eating away taxpayers' paycheques, but not much else. B.C. has the highest carbon tax in Canada, but, according to provincial analysis, the province's emissions have risen five out of the last seven years.

The carbon tax is all economic pain without the environmental gain and Canadian politicians aren't stopping global climate change by continuing to inflict harm on Canadian families and businesses.

Canada only produces 1.6% of global greenhouse gas emissions so a carbon tax here won't have a global impact — a point even Trudeau recognized when he said "even if Canada stopped everything

tomorrow, and the other countries didn't have any solutions, it wouldn't make a big difference."

The federal government's unpopular carbon tax is compounding its problems on other fronts where similarly unworkable policies are blocking resource development.

The cancellation of the Teck Resource's \$20-billion oilsands project is just the latest example. Regulatory and legal issues in Canada have already led to the cancellation of \$100 billion worth of resource projects, according to the C.D. Howe Institute. Meanwhile Saudi Arabia is investing \$110 billion to develop a natural gas field and Russia is moving forward with \$150 billion investments touted as the "biggest project in the modern-day global oil industry."

Bad policies cost Canadian taxpayers too much. Carbon taxes cost them too much when they pay for necessities such as filling up their minivans and heating their homes. Tangles of regulations that halt projects cost us jobs. The Alberta victory gives new hope that the Supreme Court will strike down the carbon tax and start making life a little easier for taxpayers.

Aaron Wudrick is the federal director and Franco Terrazzano is the Alberta director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation.

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oronto Sun -Published: February 28, 2020

# Jack Welch, 'manager of the century' who reshaped GE, dies at 84



Jack Welch, the champion of corporate efficiency who built General Electric Co. into one of the world's largest companies and influenced generations of business leaders, has died. He was 84.

His death was reported Monday by CNBC, which cited his wife, Suzy.

The former GE chairman and chief executive officer, whose blunt style and ceaseless cost cutting earned him the sobriquet "Neutron Jack," mentored proteges who went on to run some of the world's best-known companies. Named "Manager of the Century" by Fortune magazine in 1999, he presided over a stock surge of almost 3,000 per cent during a two-decade tenure.

"He became the gold standard of greatness, the icon of industrial imagination," said Jeffrey Sonnenfeld, a Yale University business professor who knew Welch since the 1980s. "His track record over those 20 years as CEO is hard to see excelled anywhere."

Known simply as Jack to even low-level employees, Welch became the youngest CEO in GE's history in 1981. He created a leaner company, yet one whose dependence on finance would eventually prove to be a threat. Along the way, he molded GE's culture to reflect his demanding personality, one larger than his 5-foot-7-inch (1.7-meter) frame.

"I like challenging people. I like debate. I like all those things," he told interviewer Charlie Rose less than two months after his 2001 retirement. "And yet I love having a drink with 'em, too."

## SECOND CAREER

Welch stepped down four days before the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. He remained active for more than a decade as a consultant and media commentator.

Business leaders extolled his ability to boost profit and shareholder wealth with his restless, results-driven approach. GE became the world's biggest company by market value at more than \$500 billion in 1999.

Imitators across corporate America copied his leadership strategies, and recruiters snapped up lieutenants including W. James McNerney Jr., who later became Boeing Co.'s CEO, and Robert Nardelli, who ran Home Depot Inc. and Chrysler. Another GE executive, Jeffrey Immelt, would best them to succeed Welch.

Welch's legacy was dented in retirement, as GE's stock lost a third of its value within a year. The shares would lag behind the pre-Sept. 11 level for virtually all of Immelt's 16 years as CEO.

Soon after Enron Corp. collapsed in late 2001, GE found itself facing accounting questions about whether Welch relied on moves such as one-time asset sales to produce consistently steady profit gains. GE Capital under Welch grew so vast that unit's struggles in the 2008-2009 financial crisis would imperil all of GE. The company has since exited nearly all of the lending businesses.

## FINANCE REVISITED

"There's been some revisiting of the robustness of the financial services model. GE Capital was providing cover for some other parts of the business," Sonnenfeld said. There was a "backlash that did dog Jack Welch."

John Francis Welch Jr. was born Nov. 19, 1935, in Peabody, Massachusetts. He was the only child of John Sr., a Boston & Maine Railroad conductor, and Grace Andrews Welch.

Growing up in Salem, Massachusetts, he was outspoken and athletic. He played golf, hockey and baseball at Salem High School, where he was voted "most talkative and noisiest" boy by classmates and wrote in the school literary magazine that he wanted to "make a million."

Welch's mother infused him with self-confidence and helped him overcome a boyhood stutter — "the most influential person in my life," he wrote in his 2001 autobiography "Jack: Straight From the Gut."

## 'YOU PUNK!'

After a close hockey defeat as a youngster, Welch flung his stick across the ice, prompting his mother to march into the locker room, grab him by the jersey and shout: "You punk! If you don't know how to lose, you'll never know how to win."

In 1957, he graduated with honours from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst with a bachelor's degree in engineering. Three years later, he received a doctorate in chemical engineering from the University of Illinois and took a \$10,500-a-year job with GE in Pittsfield,

Massachusetts, where the company developed new businesses in plastics.

Working his way through the ranks from vice president to vice chairman, Welch gained a reputation as a maverick, questioning whether GE was being run the right way. He saw GE's future in plastics, medical equipment and financial services, not household appliances.

## WINNERS, LOSERS

At 45, Welch succeeded Reginald Jones as chairman and CEO. While GE was profitable, Welch was concerned that it was too big to be flexible. He sorted GE's divisions into "winners" — those first or second in their industries — and "losers," mostly older units that had to improve or face disposal.

Over a five-year span in the 1980s, he sold more than 200 businesses and closed dozens of factories. Annual dismissals of the 10 percent of employees deemed the lowest performers also became standard. Welch's moves would shrink the workforce by one-third to 239,000 people.

"A successful leader can shock an organization and lead its recovery. An unsuccessful leader will shock an organization and paralyze it," Welch said in a 1994 Industry Week interview. "Organizations constantly need to be regenerated."

GE under Welch spent more than \$25 billion on acquisitions, and he pushed into finance as the U.S. economy shifted away from manufacturing. He looked overseas, too, boosting foreign sales by more than 50 per cent.

He pioneered widely imitated training programs, including "Work-Out," in which employees learned to accelerate decision-making with days of brainstorming. In 1995, Welch implemented the Six Sigma quality controls to improve manufacturing processes. Noting GE's success, companies around the world would adopt a similar methodology.

## 'TREMENDOUS PASSION'

Welch knew thousands of employees by name and would send handwritten notes to voice his approval or dissatisfaction.

"He had tremendous, tremendous passion for the business, but he also had tremendous passion for people," William Conaty, whose 40-year GE career included serving as human resources chief under Welch, said in a 2014 interview. "If your wife was sick, he'd want to know how she was doing."

Welch also worked six days a week, taking only Sunday off to golf — he called working weekends "a blast" — and expected similar dedication from those who wanted to get ahead.

"I never once asked anyone, 'Is there someplace you would rather be — or need to be — for your family or favourite hobby or whatever?'" he said in his 2005 book, "Winning."

Welch delayed his mandatory age-65 retirement for almost a year for a final challenge: a US\$53 billion bid for Honeywell International Inc. that collapsed when he balked at European regulators' demands for concessions.

## BASEBALL, GOLF

A lifelong Boston Red Sox fan, Welch would test executives and potential hires on their baseball knowledge. He was also a golf addict, hitting the links with Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton and executives including Warren Buffett and Bill Gates.

After leaving GE, Welch served as a part-time adviser, a partner at investment firm Clayton Dubilier & Rice and consultant to companies including JPMorgan Chase & Co. He taught at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's business school, opened a management institute bearing his name and stayed in the public eye with guest-host gigs on CNBC and New England Sports Network.

Welch married Carolyn Osburn in 1959, and they had four children before divorcing in 1987. He was married to corporate lawyer Jane Beasley for 13 years. They divorced in 2002 amid revelations of an affair with Harvard Business Review editor Suzy Wetlaufer that began when Wetlaufer was interviewing him for an article.

The two married in 2004 and went on to collaborate on "Winning," but not before divorce proceedings opened a public argument over Welch's fortune, with his second wife's lawyers claiming his asset valuation of US\$456 million was at least \$100 million too low. The case was settled in 2003.

By then, Welch's retirement package had been shown to include his US\$11 million Central Park West apartment in New York City, use of a private jet, a leased Mercedes-Benz, restaurant and laundry expenses, country-club fees and sports tickets. He later opted to pay for some perks himself.

With assistance from Heather Burke.  
March 2, 2020 - Bloomberg News  
<https://business.financialpost.com/>

## Chrysler begins phasing out Dodge Grand Caravan, cuts 1,500 jobs at plant

Fiat Chrysler Automobiles NV will lay off 1,500 unionized employees at its assembly plant in Windsor, Ont. as the automaker phases out production of the Dodge Grand Caravan.

On Thursday, the Italian-American automaker notified Unifor of its plans to cut the third shift at the plant as of June 29. It will phase out the minivan at the end of May to “align volumes with demand,” FCA spokeswoman Lou Ann Gosselin said in an emailed statement.

“The company will make every effort to place indefinitely laid off hourly employees in open full-time positions as they become available based on seniority and will offer retirement packages to eligible employees,” the statement said.

The move comes after FCA announced plans to merge with France’s PSA Group in December. Executives promised not to close any plants in the merger.

“In the merger there will be no affect on production in Ontario,” FCA chief executive Mike Manley said at the time.

Approximately 4,500 workers will remain in Windsor after the cuts. The plant will continue to make the Chrysler Pacifica, Chrysler Pacifica Hybrid and Chrysler Voyager.

FCA first announced plans to eliminate the third shift in March 2019. But it delayed the downsizing after outrage and disappointment from Unifor, which at the time was also grappling with the closure of the General Motors Co. assembly plant in Oshawa, Ont.

No cuts have been proposed at FCA’s plant in Brampton, Ont., where 3,400 workers build the Chrysler 300, Dodge Charger and Dodge Challenger.  
by E

MILY JACKSON | FEBRUARY 27, 2020 | [driving.ca/](http://driving.ca/)

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# YOUR ADVERT- TISEMENT

# Lorraine Complains: As tow truck operators go to war, who can you trust?

## Rogue operators mean everyday drivers have to plan ahead and know their rights so they don't get taken for a ride



We get used to reflexively knowing who to call if things suddenly go awry. Police, fire, ambulance — all the emergency services that fly under our radar until we need them. Tow truck drivers are in there, part and parcel of the aftermath of any crash or breakdown on our roads.

A recent article in the Globe and Mail might have you a little worried about that last one, though.

Turf wars in the Greater Toronto Area are seeing tow trucks being torched, drivers being shot at and beaten and insiders worrying further escalation could see the violence spill over into bystanders.

With little regulation and a patchwork of laws that change from region to region, the towing industry has long been a kind of Wild West, with some operators acting like mobsters. Every stripe of provincial governments promises regulation and change; none deliver.

Make a plan now

How do you protect yourself from rogue drivers and the possible fallout? Like most things, being prepared is everything. That sounds easy, but consider the probable circumstances of the moment: if you've just been involved in a collision or are broken down by the side of the road, your coping mechanisms may be a little spun. You prepare for that now, which ideally means a planned course of action in the event of a crash, and a printed-out task list in your glovebox to keep you on track.

We've all seen the tow trucks sitting parked on the side of the highway. Many of them are monitoring police scanners to swoop in when there's a crash. They're counting on you not knowing your rights. There are ways to protect yourself.

Teresa Di Felice, AVP of Government and Community Relations for the CAA, says

that organization has layers of protection built in for members. "We have strict requirements for anyone driving a tow truck for the CAA. They undergo training, we have contractual agreements, they are audited and mystery-shopped." She notes operators have CAA-issued badges with their name and photo on it, and they carry tablets that allow them to prove they are answering your call.

Be aware of the schemes  
Her number one piece of advice? "Never sign a blank work order. Never." If a tow truck driver hands you a blank work order and assures you it will be fine, it will not be fine. You wouldn't sign a blank cheque; don't sign a blank work order.

Her words are echoed by Mark Graves, president of the Provincial Towing Association of Ontario (PTAO). "That work order has to have an amount on it. By law, they can't ultimately bill you more than 10 per cent over that. You have a right to ask how much it will be, and to get that number in writing." Reputable towing organizations are calling for proper provincial regulation and oversight, and in the wake of the current turf wars and extreme violence, it would be nice to see a government finally step up.

If you need a tow truck driver, you can call CAA if you have that service. You can Google a garage close by. It is also true the OPP can overrule you to get a wreck out of traffic at their discretion, but your rights remain the same even if it's not the driver of your choice.

The number one piece of advice? Never sign a blank work order—never  
We are vulnerable after a crash, and unscrupulous people will take advantage of it.

The biggest red flag, says Graves, is pressure. "High-pressure tactics are a huge sign" that something isn't right.

Di Felice adds another common promise that is used: "You have CAA, don't worry, you pay me now and they'll reimburse you."

She states CAA never requires you to pay up front for a tow, especially in cash, another common tactic on the dark side of the industry. Where else are you required to come up with hundreds of dollars in cash on the side of the road?

"If a tow truck driver is intimidating you, it's time to call 9-1-1," says De Felice. "Do not be afraid."

A tow truck clears wreckage from a collision southbound on the QEII highway just north of Airdrie, Alta., on Sunday, April 3, 2016.

Check your insurance policy  
Graves says the PTAO did a survey and found 92 per cent of respondents had no clue if their insurance covered them for a tow in the event of a crash. Read your policy or call your broker.

Also understand that a tow is about much more than your car dangling from a hook, and could include travel, storage, impounds and fees. The best way to gain back control at a time when you feel you have none is to be prepared.

Print off the CAA Towing Bill of Rights and keep it in your car. It's excellent whether you're a CAA member or not.

Plan ahead. Chances are you travel the same route often. Check for the location of dealers you trust where you can direct your vehicle to be towed, even if you're not in your home city. CAA members can access excellent towing distances, and there is a good chance you can get your vehicle brought back to your own community.

Talk to your own trusted garage, Graves suggests, and get a list of body shops they trust to work with. Have this information on hand.

Keep all of this information in your glove box. It will help you remain clear-headed at a time you might be in shock, or disoriented. Tell anyone who drives your car what to do in the event of a crash, and where this information is, especially your kids.

De Felice and Graves both note this is a highly stressful situation, and a step-by-step program a calm you has laid out for an agitated you is invaluable.

You have rights. High-pressure tactics from a tow truck driver are your first, huge red flag. Protect yourself.

by LORRAINE SOMMERFELD - driving.ca

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