

Punishment should fit the crime

Oakville Beaver Editorial

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No one should ever have to endure the senseless and sudden loss faced by the loved ones of Innisfil's David Virgoe.

By all accounts the 48-year-old, truck-driving father of three and grandfather of five sacrificed himself in order to save others travelling along Highway 400 near Bradford on Monday.

The Ontario Provincial Police have credited the trucker's evasive manoeuvres with minimizing the highway carnage the day he encountered three alleged road racers on the highway's northbound lanes.

Virgoe's death is a stark reminder the rules governing our streets and highways aren't enough of a deterrent to those who engage in reckless driving.

Motorists who speed for the thrill of it must be made to understand that public roadways aren't their race tracks or venues for demonstrations of bravado. Monday's tragedy is an indication that street and highway racers aren't getting that message.

Anyone who believes Virgoe's death was an isolated incident, should consider statistics from a recent crack down on street racers by York Regional Police. With the help of a helicopter to spot dangerous drivers from above, police officers charged more than 550 drivers with street racing offences over a six-week period. Can you say epidemic?

We agree with the sentiments of OPP Commissioner Julian Fantino, who worries that without harsher sentences handed out by our courts, more tragedies are inevitable.

"This was a senseless act that cost a man his life and has left his family without a father, brother and grandfather," Fantino said, adding, "there is no excuse for street racing and aggressive driving, such as the high speeds and unsafe lane changes we have seen recently."

We applaud the OPP and other police forces for stepping up their efforts to target aggressive drivers, those who don't wear seatbelts and those who drive while impaired.

However, until much stiffer punishments are meted out by our justice system, more innocent families will continue to be victimized by those who feel a need to speed.

When the irresponsible behaviour of strangers costs someone their life, the least society can do is toughen its laws to ensure punishments fit the crime. Only then can the scales of justice be balanced.



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