

‘Don’t Drink and Drive’ - Why is this message not getting through?

By Marni Walsh

Despite billions of tax dollars behind the ‘Don’t Drink and Drive’ campaign, the message is not getting through to many Canadians.

According to a recent article in the National Post, says Dufferin lawyer David Thwaites, Canada is #1 in impaired driving deaths.

Chief Kent Moore of Shelburne Police Services says that all police services in Dufferin County, including the OPP, ‘work together to combat impaired driving.’

Canadian fatalities linked to alcohol impairment include 10,000 deaths between 2008 and 2012, higher than deaths by homicide in our country. All efforts by police and anti-drinking and driving government expenditures seem to be failing to elicit change.

Is it really a mystery? Alcohol is still the cheapest, most accessible ‘drug of choice.’

The tragic reality is - that until that changes ‘it is unlikely that the statistics will either.

In a letter to the Shelburne Free Press last week, Mr. Thwaites, a Melancthon resident wrote, ‘We have the same problem here at home as our fellow Canadians.’

He said, statistical information from the Shelburne Police Service, the Orangeville Police Service and the Dufferin OPP ‘tell us that there has been no appreciable decline in impaired driving offences between 2012 to current. Shelburne had seven cases of drunk driving in 2012 pointed out Mr. Thwaites, but have had 13 already in 2016 and 29 in the town of Orangeville.

‘The holiday season is the time of year that family and friends get together to celebrate and most times these celebrations involve alcohol,’ says Chief Moore. ‘We continuously remind people to plan ahead and make arrangements for a safe ride home. We also encourage citizens to call the police if they observe any driver they feel may be impaired.’

‘There are significant resources being expended to combat impaired driving through programs such as RIDE, together with the cost of investigation and prosecution. I understand that the cost for the Shelburne Police Service in addressing impaired driving offences approximates almost \$60,000 per year,’ says David Thwaites, ‘yet there are taxpayers who make the choice to drive up cost by their selfish choice to drink and drive.’

‘The Shelburne Police Service conducts RIDE Programs throughout the year,’ says Chief of Police Kent Moore, ‘However we increase these spot checks during the holiday season.’

The real cost of drinking and driving, the loss of life and destruction of families is, as Mr. Thwaites says, ‘priceless.’ He says, ‘The issue is not how much can I drink and still drive? Has two hours gone by? Is there a RIDE program? The answer is don’t drink if you are going to drive.’

Chief Kalinski of the Orangeville Police Services reminds citizens they can help stop drunk drivers. ‘If you see someone on our roads who you suspect is impaired, call 911 immediately.’