

OPINION

news

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OUR VIEW

Damage keeps accumulating

The ongoing Senate scandal has certainly done its share of damage — to the prime minister, the Conservative Party, the institution of the Senate and politicians in general.

The damage may not spread past that group, but it is significant and it may be lasting.

The Senate is certainly at its low point. It has never been popular with Canadians, being seen as a repository for bagmen, party hacks and failed politicians. While a few individual senators have done important

and significant work, as a whole the institution does little of lasting importance.

Now it has clearly been shown that many senators, and this goes far beyond Mike Duffy, Pamela Wallin and Patrick Brazeau, have had their hands in the cookie jar. Even when they get caught, the Senate and indeed the prime minister do little or nothing to change the culture of entitlement, which is widespread through the federal government.

It isn't just politicians who

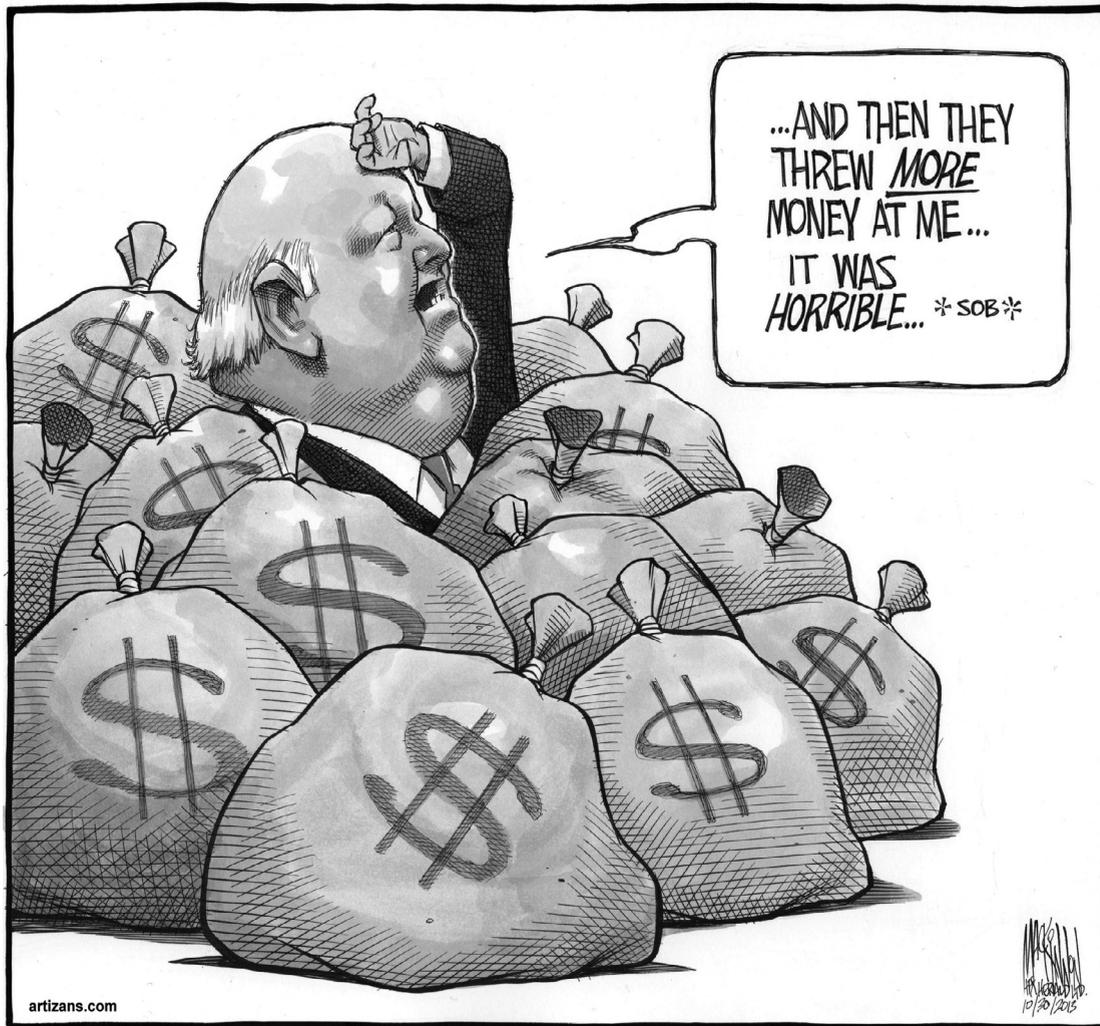
feel they are entitled to benefits that most other Canadians don't get. Public servants have clauses in their contracts relating to sick leave, indexed pensions, severance and extended health care that most others can only dream of. The prime minister first took office in 2006 on a pledge to reform the Senate. It is now clear he has no idea of how to do so.

A court decision in Quebec has basically ruled all his reform ideas cannot be implemented, and the court decision implies that the Senate will never

be abolished, unless most provinces agree.

Even if, in the court of public opinion, Stephen Harper is cleared of direct knowledge of off-the-books payments to senators, the public won't soon forget that he appointed these three senators, and that he campaigned vigorously on Senate reform.

As for the Conservative Party, in the next election its fortunes are totally tied to Harper. If he falters, so does the party. It has no plan B.



Sound off

TUESDAY'S QUESTION:

Are you disappointed to see the Centre of Gravity festival no longer taking place on the August long weekend?

YES	12%
NO	88%
UNDECIDED	0%

THURSDAY'S QUESTION:

Do you think Prime Minister Stephen Harper is being unfairly blamed for the abuse of expenses allegation fiasco currently being played out in the Senate? See editorial above.

To register your opinion on the Sound Off question, go to www.kelownacapnews.com or call 250-979-7303. Results will be tabulated until 2 p.m. Monday.

Motorists need to be on alert during Halloween night

With this being the first time in seven years of writing this column that it's published on Halloween, I have two pieces of advice to share.

One of them is that going out in public wearing a hotdog suit feels oddly liberating. If only we didn't feel we had to take ourselves seriously the other 364 days in the year.

As for my other piece of Halloween advice, first consider if you one of the 1.2 million people who have watched the British Columbia made YouTube video: Speed Kills your Pocketbook?

The video makes a compelling case for increasing posted speed limits to approximate the natural flow

of traffic. It ridicules use of the message "speed kills" to support the money grab of radar traps where drivers are ticketed for following the natural flow of traffic. It makes the point that when "speeding" is at the natural flow of traffic the only thing speed kills is your pocketbook.

I find it interesting that the video went viral at about the same time as B.C.'s new transportation minister announced that speed limits on our highways are long overdue for a review and could see an increase based on current research.



ACHIEVING JUSTICE

Paul Hergott

a minimum, rather than a maximum speed. This becomes dangerous when road, traffic, visibility or weather conditions come into play.

The media made a big deal, and properly so, about unheeded warnings of an unsafely parked construction vehicle hours before a motorist

Why can't the right things happen for the right reasons, rather than for political reasons?

I also have a problem with speed limits, but not because they are too low, but because most people seem to view them as

smashed into the back of that vehicle and was killed on the No. 1 Highway in Langley last month.

The theme of the news story was that the fatality would have been avoided had the warnings been heeded. No mention was made of the importance of reducing your speed in dense fog conditions so that you can react to the unexpected.

The most important speed limit law in this province, in my view, comes from section 144 of the Motor Vehicle Act. Subsection 1(c) reads as follows: "A person must not drive a motor vehicle on a highway at a speed that is excessive relative to the road, traffic, visibility or weather conditions."

It is a common sense prohibition. Speed, indeed, kills when that important speed limit law is ignored.

So this is where my other piece of Halloween advice comes. The children of our community will be prowling around this evening.

So yes, we should be ensuring that our children are dressed for safety, readily visible to motorists and without their own vision blocked by their costumes.

Older children should be carefully coached to take care when crossing the street and younger children should be carefully supervised.

In my view, however, the much,

LETTERS

▼ OUTSIDE THE BOX

Economically imprudent railway line could be great cycling tourist attraction

To the editor:

Re: Debate currently going on with the Vernon-Kelowna section of the old rail line.

They estimate it will take \$10 million to retrofit the line for safety.

Sure, I imagine the line doesn't turn a big profit either, certainly can't foresee it as a commuter train line anytime soon.

What it does provide though, is a critical thread that joins communities, many that are now being isolated by new roadways way up the mod-

ern infrastructure ladder. This scenic thread could morph into an economic and social artery if the political and tourism leaders' resolve was engaged—all you need is a plan for that bed of stone and steel.

Generations of businesses will know doubt say that it has been a lifeblood for them, conversely a nemesis for others for lots of different reasons—safety, threat of pollution in the lake, etc. The bottom line always talks anyway.

How do we keep those economic wheels spin-

ning on this ancient rail line all the while doing something for struggling rural areas en route? Create a local tourism entity group that would provide the regional district with the option of a hand-over of the entire easement, city to city, for what should be one of the most iconic rail trails in the entire world. It would rival the best trails around, like Costa Brava Spain, Queen Charlotte NZ.

This wouldn't compete with the KVR Trail but only compliment it, enhancing the Oka-

nagan as a destination for family-friendly, active tourism.

The amazing section of the KVR from Naramata to Myra Bellevue could be first of two days of a leisurely four-day value-adding cycle to Vernon. Tell me, where else in the world does this opportunity of a rail bed easement just sitting primed for recreational use on a series of lakes exist?

With just a simple bicycle and some hikers it would morph into a sustainable community asset

with low maintenance infrastructure that would become an iconic "lake country trail," provide an ongoing lifeblood for land owners and tourism businesses.

Studies worldwide have shown that rail trails can (if done correctly) provide a return on investment for communities far beyond other recreational infrastructure and the bonus of being a healthy, positive thing for connecting our communities for the future.

David Lalik,
Kelowna

▼ SPEED LIMIT

Only a wide-spread police presence will change speeding drivers' dangerous habit

To the editor:

It's common knowledge that the posted speed limit and stop signs are, to the majority of people, mere suggestions.

Disregarding the rules, excessive speed and distracted driving are at the root of most accidents.

And, by the way, road and weather conditions do not 'cause' accidents.

Road and weather conditions only make the accident more likely to happen when the excessive speed, the following too close and the distracted driving put the driv-

er in a situation he or she can't control.

It is almost always the drivers involved causing the accident and age and gender are irrelevant.

Efforts to reduce accidents by reducing or raising the posted speed limit will fail.

More signs will also be ignored. Only police enforcement has any hope of changing behaviour.

Accidents, injury and fatality will continue as long as there are no real incentives to change behaviour; as long as people have the belief that ac-

cidents only happen to someone else; or if they are involved in an accident it had to have been the fault of the other driver, the road or the weather.

Ed Loewen,
West Kelowna

▼ TIME TO CHANGE GOVERNMENT

Harper can't win back the respect he has lost

To the editor:

The ultimate ending to the Senate trap the Prime Minister finds himself is that

he will be seen as a failed leader at the end of a long regime.

He has failed to bring true reform to the senate, he finds himself encircled with legal opinions

and judicial announcements that prevent any serious action on Senate reform. These are mainly due to self-induced delays and poor Senate appointments that have shown his true colours and weak judgement. (His colours are not conservative blue, but pink from embarrassment).

His party is becoming fractured and his support is waning publicly.

"All the King's horses and all the King's men can't put Humpty Dumpty back together again," to remind us through a child's nursery rhyme.

The Senate debacle has already clouded the public focus on the new

European-Canada free trade interim agreement which won't be really in effect until after the next election and 28 European states have signed on to it.

Political respect lost is difficult to regain and his party's onslaught into federal New Democratic and Liberal territories across the country has already

lost total momentum, as polls are showing—his three terms in power is enough.

He must go or lead his party to a Mulroney-sized defeat.

It's time for change and not just in the Senate.

John O Powell,
Kelowna

Trick-or-treaters need to make themselves visible to drivers

HERGOTT FROM A8

much greater onus of care falls upon motorists.

Those of us behind the wheel this evening must follow the common sense prohibition contained within section 144 of the Motor Vehicle Act.

We must drive at a speed that takes into account the unique, Halloween, road conditions.

Every residential area should be treated like a school zone.

We need to be driving at a speed that allows us to react to the eager trick-or-treater who forgets his or her parents' caution and darts out from between cars to get to the house on the other side of the street.

I wish us all a safe Halloween.

This column is intended to provide general information about injury claims. It is not a substitute for retaining a lawyer to provide legal advice specifically pertaining to your case. Paul Hergott is a lawyer at Hergott Law in West Kelowna.

Express yourself

We welcome letters that comment in a timely manner about stories and editorials published in the Capital News.

Letters under 200 words will be given priority in considering them for publication. We reserve the right to edit for clarity, brevity, legality and taste.

Letters sent directly to reporters may be treated as letters to the editor.

Letters must bear the name, address and telephone number of the writer. Names will be withheld at the editor's discretion, only under exceptional circumstances.

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