

CAPITAL NEWS

OPINION

news

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OUR VIEW

It's clear, it's time to reform Senate

The latest revelation from the ongoing Senate expense scandal is that Saskatchewan Senator Pamela Wallin will likely be asked to repay about \$120,000 in expenses.

This comes as a result of an external audit of her expenses, which in about two years were more than \$300,000.

While Prime Minister Stephen Harper has worked to try and reform the Senate from within since winning power in 2006, it is clear that this institu-

tion just doesn't get it.

It is notable that two of the most profligate senators in the spending department, Wallin and Mike Duffy, were longtime TV journalists who regularly reported on numerous scandals in Ottawa. They join two other senators, Mac Harb—who quit the Senatethis week—and Patrick Brazeau, in showing Canadians how out of touch the Senate is with the real folks who pay taxes to support this kind of behaviour. All but Harb were appointed by

Harper.

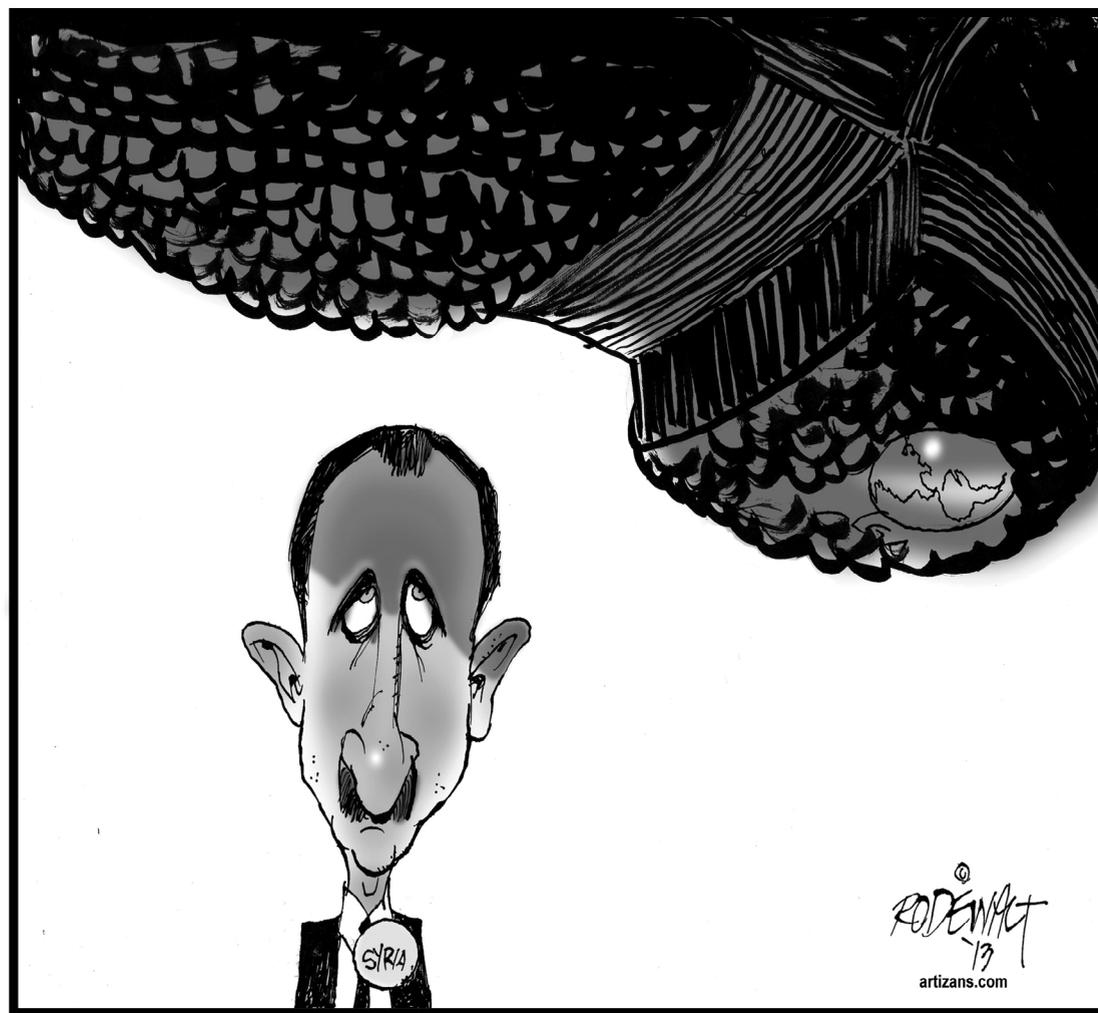
Harper's government has now asked the Supreme Court of Canada to rule on just how Senate reform can proceed, as the institution is mandated in the constitution and thus is very hard to change. But it clearly has a lot of institutional problems which are deep-rooted.

The vast majority of the public support abolition at present. If there was a national referendum on abolition, it would likely pass in each province, which would

probably be enough of a popular mandate to support a constitutional change.

But provinces don't give up powers easily, and all it would take is one province which decided to go against the popular will for whatever reason it deems appropriate.

The Senate is badly in need of radical reform. Perhaps a first step would be to limit senators' expenses to a modest maximum amount which would cover real expenses. *Langley Times*



Sound off

TUESDAY'S QUESTION:

Do you think Kelowna's City Park is an appropriate place to build a tourist information centre?

YES	15%
NO	85%
UNDECIDED	0%

THURSDAY'S QUESTION:

Should using a cell phone when driving, or texting when driving, carry the same penalties as drinking and driving? (See Paul Hergott's column below.)

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.

More deaths from talking hands-free than drunk driving

Should phoning and texting while driving carry the same penalties as drunk driving?

That was the topic of the Aug. 25 episode of CBC Radio's Cross Country Check-up. Guest host, Ted Blades, introduced the



ACHIEVING JUSTICE

Paul Hergott

topic with the statistic that distracted driving, such as talking on phones and texting, has become the No. 1 cause of highway deaths in Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan. It is No. 2 in Ontario, behind speeding but ahead of drunk driving. Laws prohibiting hand-held but al-

lowing hands-free cell phone use were exposed as problematic. According to guest Jeff Walker, the National vice-president of Public Affairs for the Canadian Automobile Association (CAA), the data says that hands-free cell phone use, whether voice to text or talking, is just as bad and may be worse than having the cell phone in your hands.

I get frustrated and angry every time I think about British Columbia's laws that prohibit hand-held but implicitly endorse hands-free cell phone use. How can we have made it illegal

in British Columbia for a driver to hold a cell phone up to his or her ear while engaging in a dangerously distracting telephone discussion, while allowing the exact same dangerous behaviour with the cell phone sitting on the console?

Perhaps our law makers were misinformed about the dangers of distracted driving when we brought in the law.

As the statistics for distracted driving injuries and deaths climb, how can we not yet have woken up to the truth and changed the law to prohibit cell phone use while driving altogether?

Perhaps politicians don't like to admit when they're wrong, particu-

larly after having caused a mass purchase of hands-free cell phone technology.

I forgive you for being wrong. Please, just do what's right. How many hundreds of millions, perhaps billions, of tax dollars and other costs to British Columbians need to be wasted in emergency services, medical care, economic and other losses, before we start taking steps to solve this growing problem?

Back to the topic of treating distracted driving behaviours the same way we treat drunk driving.

Drunk driving has become less and less socially acceptable as we have collectively come to recognize the horrible consequences of drunk

driving. We have become less and less likely to drive drunk, and less and less tolerant of that dangerous driving behaviour in others.

With distracted driving topping drunk driving as a cause of driving injuries and deaths, the same transition has to occur with distracted driving. Aggressive, and expensive, public awareness campaigns need to be launched, pointing to the dangers of cell phone use while driving.

I suggest that the cheapest and most effective public awareness campaign would be a change in the law to prohibit all cell phone use while driving, hand-held and hands-free.

LETTERS

▼ WEST KELOWNA

Youth at risk need our continuing support from a wide base of sources

To the editor:

On May 7, 2013, there was a meeting at the Westbank Community Hall concerning homeless youth here in West Kelowna.

I hope that our community continues to insist on helping them. To have to return day after day to a home that is unsafe, vio-

lent and unreasonable is damaging to a person of any age.

A child who is abused and constantly told that it is their fault, is a child that is being programmed to fail in life. The youth is now wired to be attracted to, and attract, people who are like their parents were—unsafe and un-

reasonable.

Unless they are able to get counselling, which is hard work and not always affordable, they may well be dealing with the effects of their abusive home life well into their 40s, as they are trying to raise families of their own.

Abuse tends to be handed down generation-

ally. It certainly was in my family.

The abuse today's homeless youth have suffered, may well be passed on to this community's next generation if there is no help established.

Please continue to be involved in supporting the initiative to get a shelter for homeless youth up and

running on the Westside. These kids are worth it, they have value and they are the future of this place and this society.

They can only become all that they were born to be if they have the safety and encouragement to discover who that is.

Robin Munro,
West Kelowna

▼ WAGES OF WAR

Where do Syria's chemical weapons come from? When will we ever learn?

To the editor:

Re: chemical weapons of war.

So, now we hear news that chemical nerve gas might have been used in Syria.

That is no surprise, some crazy people wage war.

So, ask yourself: Where do the chemicals come from?

Probably the USA, Russia or maybe

China.

Are the other countries of the world any better than the ones "using" the weapons that were supplied from abroad?

Saddam Hussein used the same kind of weapons against the Kurds in Iraq.

Where do all the weapons come from? They are supplied by all the other countries—nothing personal—it is just business.

It is the "business" of killing children and destroying a country of many innocent people just trying to make a living and getting along.

We should all be ashamed of ourselves for just being bystanders in all this.

We have not come very far from the time of the crazy Romans who waged war just for the fun of it. When will we ever learn?

Jorgen Hansen, Kelowna

▼ BUSINESS LONGEVITY

Kelowna has a history of long-lasting businesses: Can you add to the list of 50+ year businesses?

To the editor:

This letter is a question put out to some of the "born and raised in Kelowna" people—there are really not a lot of us

I was recently out for a bike ride and stopped for a bite to eat at one of my favourite little places—The

Shady Rest fish and chip shop on Sutherland Avenue.

As I was sitting there enjoying my meal I was remembering coming to this exact same spot as a little girl, a teeny bit more than 50 years ago (yikes). Same name, same spot.

This started me thinking—how many retail businesses can say the same thing here in town?

Still operating in Kelowna, same business, same location, at least 50 years later.

After thinking about it for the rest of the day I

came up with the Paramount Theatre on Bernard Avenue (walked there once a week), Robertson's Clothing and Lakeview Market on Pandosy Street.

I even called in my mother-in-law, Joyce (Ansell) Roche, who was also born and raised here. She suggested OK Builders and Haworth Jewellers.

I did catch her off guard though, and she is going to think on it and

get back to me.

Next calls should have been to Wayne Wilson or Don Burnett they have much better memories than I ever will. So perhaps they will throw out some names?

So what about it, Kelowna alumni, can you think of other retail business that would fit this criteria? Quite amazing for those that are still here!

Susan Marshall,
Kelowna

Scream, shout to change law

HERGOTT FROM A10

While raising awareness is part of the solution, we have learned the hard lesson with drunk driving that dangerous driving behaviours don't stop just because they become socially unacceptable.

The brilliant step taken by British Columbia to impose harsh, roadside penalties for drunk driving has resulted in a measurable reduction in drunk driving deaths, pointing to enforcement as an important tool.

Yes, harsh penalties would undoubtedly reduce the behaviour, but is it appropriate? Are dis-

tracted driving behaviours as morally reprehensible as driving drunk?

I say no, given our collective ignorance about the dangers of cell phone use while driving, fuelled by a lack of legal prohibition when that behaviour is done hands-free.

Once we learn about how dangerous the behaviour is, though, I would argue that the sober choice to engage in a dangerous driving behaviour is even more morally reprehensible than making the alcohol impaired choice of driving drunk.

I invite anyone interested to listen to the archived CBC program

which you can find by typing "Cross Country Checkup driving" into an Internet search engine.

Once you get your head around it, I invite you to scream and shout and stomp your feet until we take concrete steps in the right direction in British Columbia.

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.

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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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