

A couple of recent developments cast a worrying shadow over the roles that police, courts and our provincial insurer have in keeping our streets safe.

We can all agree that drinking and driving is a stupid - not to mention criminal - thing to do. But should that give police the right to force a breath sample from every driver on the street? A private member's bill was put before Parliament late last year urging random breathalyzer testing, and while it hasn't generated a huge buzz, it does have the enthusiastic backing of Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

We fully support this worthwhile organization, but we draw the line at treating our streets like a totalitarian police state. As it stands, police already conduct random roadblocks to catch drunk drivers - as they should. If there are grounds to believe a driver might be impaired, then he or she is made to blow.

But forcing every driver on the road to do so is no different than police searching every house on the block just in case there might be a grow-op inside. It may get results, but that doesn't make it right.

When there are grounds for suspicion, by all means, use the full extent of the law. Until then, all Canadians should be considered innocent, not guilty parties waiting to get caught.

The second item involves a court ruling that found designated drivers are not covered by third-party insurance if the drunk they are driving home causes them to crash.

ICBC even went to court to fight having to pay out in such a case. The lame excuse given: that liability only covers those outside the car, not in it.

Talk about discouraging people from doing the right thing.

On the one hand, we have an insurer - and a judge - practically pushing people toward taking a stupid chance.

On the other, well-meaning volunteers and police treating every person on the street like a criminal.

It's enough to make you want to stay home.

- Managing Editor

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