

Muzzo sentenced to 10 years

By Angela Gismondi

Marco Muzzo has been sentenced to 10 years in prison after the drunk driver killed three children and their grandfather in a horrific September crash in Vaughan.

Minus time already served in custody, the 29-year-old will serve nine years and four months. He was also sentenced to a driving prohibition for 12 years which will begin after his release.

Muzzo drove through the stop sign at Kipling Avenue and Kirby Road in Vaughan at an excessive rate of speed and T-boned the minivan carrying the Neville-Lake family Sept. 27. The accident claimed the lives of Daniel Neville-Lake, 9, Harrison Neville-Lake, 5, Milly Neville-Lake, 2, and their grandfather Gary Neville, 65. The children's grandmother and great grandmother were also seriously injured in the crash. Muzzo's blood alcohol level was almost three times the legal limit.

Last month, Muzzo pleaded guilty to four counts of impaired driving causing death and two counts of impaired driving causing bodily harm. While the Crown suggested a prison sentence of 10 to 12 years, the defence argued an eight-year sentence would be more appropriate.

Superior Court Justice Michelle Fuerst rendered her decision March 29 at the Superior Court of Justice in Newmarket. While Muzzo will be able to return to his family after serving his sentence, the Neville-Lake family will never be the same, she pointed out. In that way, they are serving their own version of a life sentence.

"The Neville-Lake family will forever be suffering from the life sentence imposed by Mr. Muzzo's drunk driving," said Fuerst.

In making her decision, Fuerst said she considered a number of aggravating and mitigating factors.

"Mr. Muzzo made the choice to drink and then drive," she said. "When he walked off the private jet at a large metropolitan airport, he had an array of transportation options readily available to him. He could have travelled home by limousine or taxi. He could have called a family member or friend to pick him up. He made the decision to get behind the wheel of his vehicle. He took risk that his driving would put other users of the roadway in danger."

"Mr. Muzzo has a lengthy prior record for driving infractions including 10 convictions for speeding," continued Fuerst. "This indicates an irresponsible attitude toward the privilege of driving. His previous convictions for speeding should have deterred him from driving above the speed limit on September 27. They did not."

Overall, she decided a lengthy sentence was necessary and would set an example.

"For as long as Mr. Muzzo has been alive, courts have warned about the consequences of impaired driving, yet the message escaped him," Fuerst stated. "It is important that it does not escape others. The high degree of Mr. Muzzo's moral blameworthiness combined with all the enormous and far-reaching consequences of his offences, sets this case apart from others. Notwithstanding the many positive aspects of Mr. Muzzo's background and character, and the fact that this is a first jail sentence for him, a lengthy penitentiary term is necessary. The just and appropriate sentence is one of 10 years."

After the sentence was handed down, the children's mother, Jennifer Neville-Lake spoke to the media outside the court house.

"The sentence is 10 years and none of my children saw 10 years," said Neville-Lake.

She showed pictures of the consequences of Muzzo's actions ? the accident and the aftermath. One of the pictures was of two of the children holding hands as they clung to life in hospital.

"This was a choice made by an individual and choices are actions that have consequences," said Neville-Lake. "Please keep in mind when you choose to drink and drive you're hurting other families, you're killing someone else's babies like mine were killed, like all of mine were killed on a beautiful Sunday afternoon just after four o'clock."