

Issue SIDE-stepped

When faced with a choice between following Catholic teachings and the welfare of gay students who attend its schools, it was no contest for the Halton Catholic District School Board.

This week's unveiling of a weak substitute to the board's previously archaic equity and inclusivity policy is evidence the school board remains mired in a state of denial.

The board's stubborn refusal to formally offer support to gay and lesbian students who are bullied, feel isolated and need somewhere to turn for support seems, well, cold to us.

The newly-proposed student support and discussion group Safety, Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity (SIDE) Spaces sounds like one-stop peer support.

The board has carefully excluded the terms "gay" or "lesbian" when discussing its SIDE Spaces proposal. One board official preferred to call it, "a more inclusive format" that is "for any student who feels they are not accepted."

It's clear to us that the school board wants to distance itself from last month's ugly incident when its chair equated gay-straight alliance (GSA) groups to Nazis.

How else do you explain that the same school board that claimed to want to make ALL of its students feel included and safe last month, refuses to allow school-based GSAs that promote understanding, tolerance and the cultivation of self-worth?

Board officials had us believing they might be prepared to entertain a modern solution to this 21st Century societal problem.

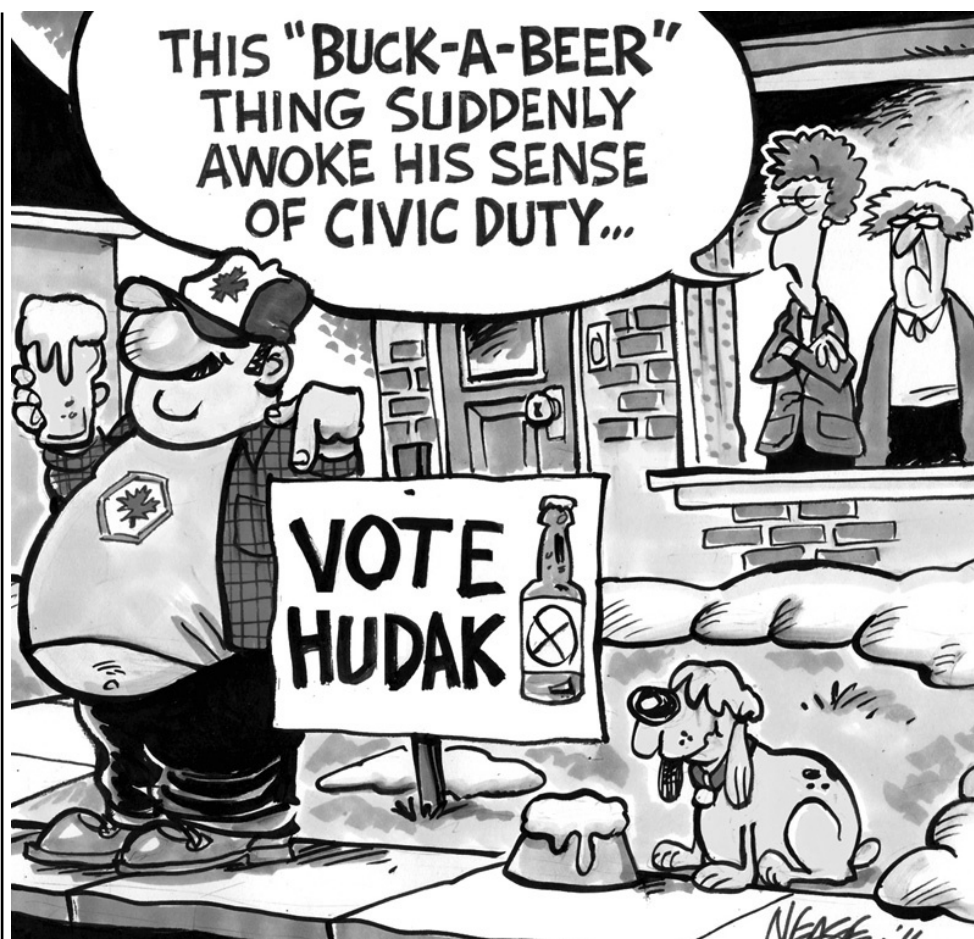
Boy, did we get fooled.

This week's introduction of SIDE Spaces gives the impression the board cares about all of its students, but offers nothing close to a GSA.

The board effectively continues to ban GSAs without actually putting it in writing as it had last fall. In practical terms gay/lesbian students are just as isolated today as they've ever been.

Just last month, the Halton Catholic board's education director acknowledged the need to "listen to the voices of our students."

While the students' message was successfully delivered, the recipients have elected to SIDE step it.



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WEB POLL RESULTS

Which Halton team will advance the furthest in this year's Provincial Jr. A Hockey League playoffs?

- Burlington Cougars (20%)
- Georgetown Raiders (30%)
- Oakville Blades (50%)

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Letters to the editor

Adding to Gellert makes most sense

Dear editor,

My purpose for writing is to point out the need for the expansion of the Gellert Centre (phase 2) before we build all the new arenas that many in the community are declaring we must do.

In 1999 the Town had planned a dedicated seniors' space, a dedicated youth space and a gymnasium at the Gellert Centre, and had to delay the building of that space to phase 2 because of capital limitations.

As a senior, my primary concern is for seniors' space.

The Georgetown Seniors' Centre currently is extremely limited in space and is not meeting the needs of existing seniors and definitely will not meet the needs of the future seniors. In 2006 there were approx 11,000 ages 55+ (5,600 ages 65+) in Halton Hills and a simple extrapolation of the data to 2016 would indicate a 50% increase in the number of seniors in Halton Hills and a 75% increase in the ages 65+. Unless the Town approves the funding for Gellert phase 2 this year, the needs of the seniors in Georgetown will

definitely not be met for many years to come!

I believe that our children need arenas to provide for skating, hockey, etc. however to grow three arenas while we continue to defer Gellert phase 2 which provides for youth, seniors, and a gymnasium for all ages seems one-sided to say the least.

I believe the dedicated youth space planned for the Gellert location along with a gymnasium would meet a need which has long been identified, a place for kids to meet outside of school.

I am suggesting that we delay the additional arena in Acton and include the Gellert phase 2 prior to that arena. In this way we would, in my opinion, more fairly meet the needs of our community.

Rick Chambers, Georgetown

Rene remembered

Dear editor,

He was one of the good ones. He could skate, put a pass right on the tape of a breaking forward, shoot hard, hit hard and block shots with fearless determination.

But what he did best was make opposing forwards regret going into the corner against him to

battle for the puck.

When Rene Martin died last week so did a memorable part of an era when the Georgetown Raiders set the bar for Intermediate hockey in Ontario. When the John Street arena would, on some bone-chilling nights, almost explode with the cheers of 1,100 Raider faithful.

It was an era when our guys were the good guys and they could play the game any way the opposition wanted it. Skill or back alley tough we could do it better.

Rene Martin came to Georgetown from Northern Ontario in the late 1940s and immediately, and for several seasons, became, from his blueline position, a big contributor to the many Raider successes that followed. In a lot of ways he epitomized those great Raider teams with his combination of talent and toughness.

It's lamentable but it was inevitable that time, age and illness should finally knock down one of the true Georgetown Raider greats, something opposing players from Napanee to Sundridge, Elmira to Bradford, and the dozens of other Intermediate Hockey towns around the province were almost never able to do.

Terry Harley, Sauble Beach

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