

It's time to educate

It is incredible but true that in this era of scientific marvels, when medical advances have done so much to help people live longer, some parents stubbornly refuse to have their children vaccinated.

Devoted though they may be, these adults are deaf to the repeated assurances from the Canadian medical establishment that inoculating the young safely spares them pain, suffering and, in many, many cases, premature death.

Likewise, these otherwise loving guardians are blind to the overwhelming evidence that vaccinations are largely responsible for the fact that a baby born in Canada today can look forward to the highest life expectancy in this nation's history — an average increase of 24 years over the lifespan of a century ago. Some of these skeptics, often known as anti-vaxxers, will dispute this record, possibly citing the now discredited belief that vaccinations can cause autism.

We know these parents mean well, but they are wrong and they are wilfully putting the lives of their children as well as other people at risk. But what is the best way to respond to them?

The answer might be found in legislation now before the provincial legislature that would help educate doubting parents about the benefits of immunization.

The disconcerting numbers justify this intervention. Ontario is falling short of national targets for most routine childhood vaccinations, according to a recent C.D. Howe Institute report.

Provincial rates for vaccinations in children aged seven — including the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine, chickenpox, and one for diphtheria, tetanus and polio — are all below the national target of 85 to 97 per cent coverage, depending on the vaccine. That's a problem when it comes to herd immunity.

There are those who believe vaccination for children should be compulsory unless there is proof this would be medically unsafe. While implementing that proposal would have the desired effect of greatly boosting the immunization rate, it would represent an extreme step that seriously challenges the traditional rights of parents to make decisions affecting their children's health.

That brings us back to Bill 198, legislation that received its first reading in May. If it becomes law, parents would still be allowed to legally exempt their children from being vaccinated because of religious or other beliefs. But before they could do this, before they could get that exemption, they would be required to attend an education session with public health officials.

This is wise legislation that deserves quick passage.

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Letters to the editor

Community gives boy a great birthday

I just wanted to write you about a birthday party for a very special young boy.

My son is turning seven and has never once had a friend attend his birthday party.

My son suffers from severe ADHD and ODD and is unable to make and or maintain friendships. I put up a post on a Facebook page called Entertain Kids on a Dime and Georgetown Mommy's.

It read: Hi there. I made a post in June regarding my son and his difficulties making and maintaining friends due to his severe ADHD and ODD.

I was reaching out to see if he could make some new friends that would be able to attend his birthday. At that time I received an overwhelming support to either attend

his birthday or to send him a card. Next week is his birthday and we will be hosting a back yard barbecue and pool party for those moms or dads that expressed interest in attending.

My son will be turning 7 and as I said before he has never once had any kids attend a party for him and it really makes him sad. He says his bucket is empty (meaning his heart) so if there are still members that would like to come or send him a card please PM for address and or party details. Thanks again so much for your support.

After posting that I received more than 120 messages of support and love, from people wishing him well, people who wanted to send him a card and some who are even able to attend his birthday.

I also received a message from a lady named Kathleen from Traditional Taste Bakery and said she would love to donate a cake for him.

I also received a message from another lady name Tarilyn with a

company called Angel Wings Inc. They do party planning with an emphasis on special needs children. She has donated her time, services and food, decoration and activities.

Someone suggested that I contact the newspaper to show how a community can come together with their support in a time of need.

Misty Strickland

Letters Policy

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