

· EDITORIAL ·

Should hate groups be banned?

There is no place in society for hate speech or hate groups. The increase in hate crimes in the GTHA and across North America, and their message of violence bigotry and racism is more than just alarming.

In an attempt to tamp down Hamilton's own rising concern about hate groups and the vitriol they sprout, many have urged city council to ban such groups from using city-owned facilities, including public parks.

Part of the reasoning behind the push is that last year the right wing group Canadian Combat Coalition received a permit to rally at city hall's forecourt against the federal anti-Islamophobia Motion 103.

Far-right groups, especially in Europe and in the United States, have held rallies, displayed signs and held talks, all using the cover of free speech to spread their message of hate against diverse groups, immigrants and the gay communities. European countries, most notably Germany, have banned many far-right and neo-Nazi groups, their signs, words and phrases with questionable success.

In the United States, where free expression is embedded in its constitution, hate speech is an allowable form of expression that has produced disastrous results such as in Charlottesville, Va.

In Canada there has been an acceptable compromise with our hate speech laws when it comes to limiting freedom of expression. Canada's Charter of Rights of Freedoms protects free expression along with multiculturalism and equality, meaning a fine balance needs to be struck between seemingly conflicting rights and freedoms within the charter.

Is it right to ban groups many in society deem abhorrent? Bans matter because they establish the mainstream moral boundaries of the day. They send a message to the community that certain actions are considered outside acceptable limits, while expressing solitary for members of vulnerable groups.

But bans are problematic. Who decides what is a hate group? Should a group that criticizes Israel be banned from city property, for instance? Where does dissent end and discrimination begin?

Bans also do not combat extremism, nor are they an effective way to counter extremist ideologues. Bans also usually backfire, fuelling youth alienation pushing them toward extremism and shoving it underground, as what has occurred in Germany and other European countries.

However, that doesn't mean councils should open the doors and welcome hate groups into parks and public buildings. Just know that bans won't solve the underlying issues that drive people to these sorts of destructive ideologies.



· LETTERS & COMMENTARY ·

Strep article missed the mark

In response to your article published on March 23 entitled Lucky to be alive:

Georgetown mother, 34, has hysterectomy after contracting group A strep. Halton Healthcare would like to address several incorrect inferences and reports within your article as follows:

- The headline - the word "contracting" is used - which by definition means "catch or develop a disease or infectious agent," implies that the patient acquired the infection in the Georgetown hospital. This is incorrect.

- The reporter has misquoted our response in one instance in the article; the item relating to whether we have had any

cases of group B strep and resultant infant fatalities. Our response was "We have had no cases of group B strep in infants or children at Georgetown Hospital in the past five months". In the article, it is reported as "Halton Health (sic) says that they have not received any reports of group B strep."

- The reporter draws a false inference of a potential connection between group A and group B strep, which are two completely distinct infectious agents.

Readers are misled by linking the patient who had the group A strep infection with a mother who lost her baby in the context of a group B strep infection.

It is important for readers to understand that group B strep is not trans-

mitted person to person, while group A strep sometimes is.

Of note is that Halton Healthcare does not have an active concern regarding group A streptococcus transmission.

Cindy McDonnell,
COO, Georgetown Hospital, Halton Healthcare,
Dr. Neil Rau,
Medical Director, Infection, Prevention & Control, Halton Healthcare

Make an informed election choice

In spite of the Ontario Liberals' complete and utter failure for the past 15 years, there is a mind numbing 19 per cent of Ontarians who would still vote for Kathleen Wynne this next election.

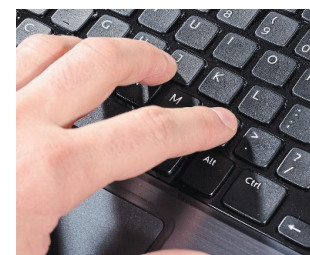
The time has come for

the ignorant and uninformed to quit blindly marking their "X" in the Liberal box every election just because they always have, and their parents always have, and so on. It's time to start acting like responsible adults.

Our children's futures depend on you.

Alain Fournier

Letters



See what our readers are saying about the issues that matter to them theifp.ca/letters

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