

OPINION

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Editorial

We're all targets, diverse or not

Canada's multiculturalism, properly nurtured, is its greatest strength. Prime Minister Stephen Harper told the opening session of the United Nations' World Urban Forum in Vancouver Monday.

Or is it a weakness that paved the way for a Muslim extremist to build a terror network here?

Some critics have blamed Canada's multicultural society for permitting the suspected terrorist network to grow.

They could be right. But in which dark corner of our national fabric are the seeds of these thoughts planted?

"They hate open, diverse, democratic societies like ours, because they want the exact opposite," Mr. Harper said, adding terrorists desire "societies that are closed, homogeneous and dogmatic."

While Canadians pride ourselves on our cultural diversity, we often live in small pockets, associating only with those like us.

Where does the fine line between a cultural gathering place and school for terrorist ideology exist?

If you believe information released by police in the days after this month's arrest of 17 suspects under Canada's Anti-Terrorism Act, hatred was spread in what seemed like an innocuous prayer centre.

Terrorists also hoped to reinforce their beliefs by killing regular Canadians, gunning down innocent shoppers or bombing buildings. Yet 60 per cent of us — those who chose to vote did so for opposition parties, just as those terror suspects, who are themselves Canadian citizens, could have done. Yet they don't see it that way.

We're all potential targets, diverse or not. It's clear many who grow up in our multicultural society still believe in an us-and-them mentality and Canadian multiculturalism can contribute to that.

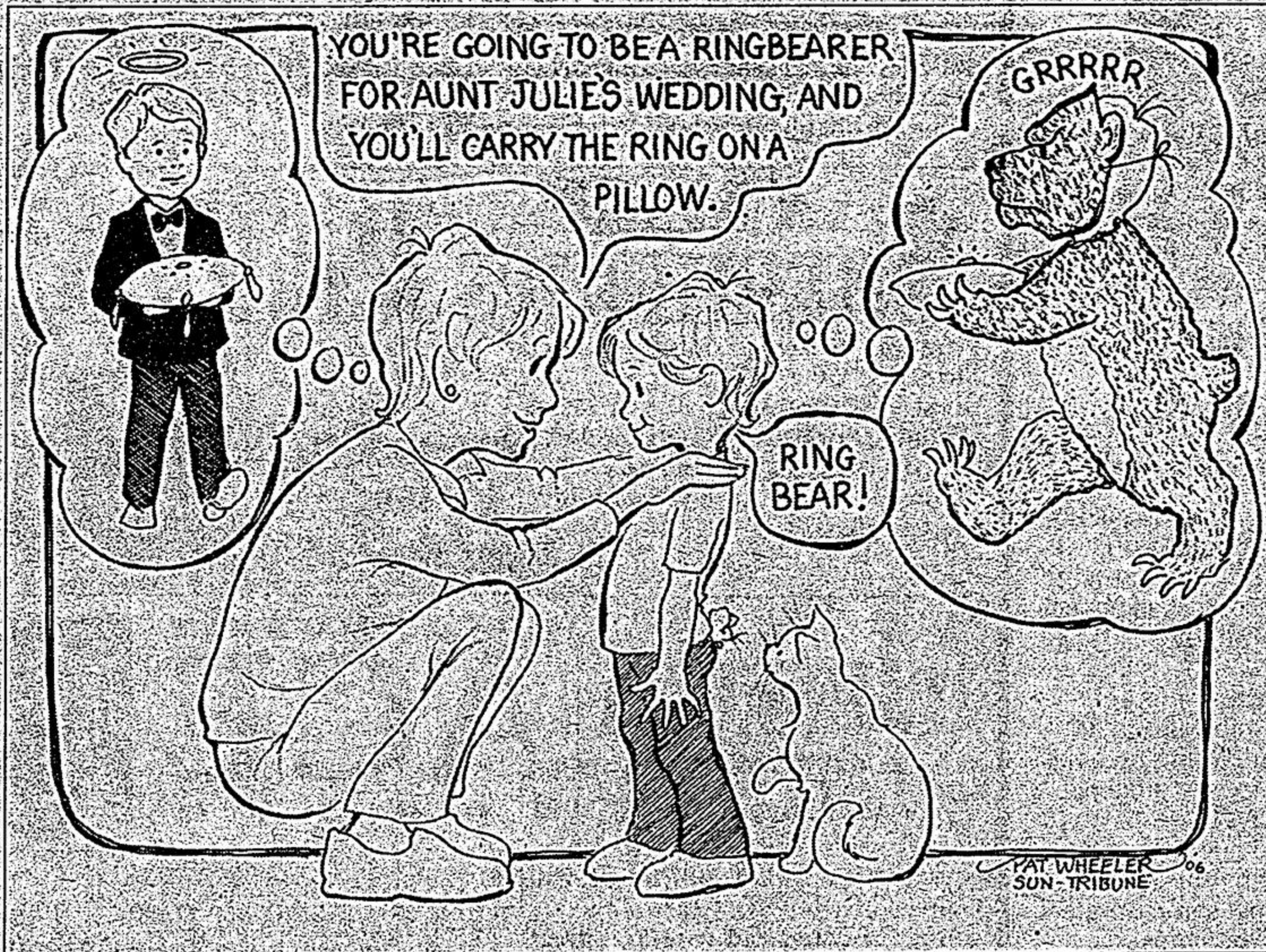
Mr. Harper suggested Canada has avoided the "ghettoization" and "ethnically polarized" areas that exist elsewhere.

This may be true for now, but the thinking that gives birth to the development of these areas exists in the minds of Canadians.

Critics have slammed Mr. Harper for eliminating the minister of multiculturalism portfolio — maybe we should stop promoting multiculturalism as a separate agenda.

We need to stop emphasizing our differences, as the terrorists would like us to do, and start looking at Canada as one nation comprised of individuals.

A society in which we are all unique.



Dave Teetzel

Do we need more government in animal control?

Our ideas about animals and how they are to be treated has changed enormously in the past 20 or so years. But the basic mechanisms we use to protect them have not.

Our expectations for the standards of animal care and protection continue to rise. Our awareness of animal cruelty is higher than ever.

Mistreatment of animals is taken seriously by the public, if not the courts.

Yet animal welfare continues to be largely in the hands of arms length non-governmental agencies. And this is creating conflicts and tensions.

In Toronto, a group of veterinarians complain the Toronto Humane Society's reluctance to euthanize animals has led to crowded and diseased conditions. That case is being investigated by the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

But that agency is facing controversy of its own.

Earlier this month, a small group marched outside the Ontario SPCA offices in Stouffville, claiming the non-profit charitable agency is a private police force, accountable to no one.

They complain inspectors, who require no more than a high school diploma and two weeks of training, can search property, seize animals, order them destroyed and lay charges.

The SPCA notes there is an animal care review board that provides a right of appeal and any charges it lays must go through the courts.

And it notes police officers don't have the time or money to investigate animal cruelty complaints.

The SPCA is doing the best it can to deal with such cases, given it receives no government funding.

So the question is if we want to give animal control laws more teeth, do we want them administered by a non-governmental charitable agency?

If the answer is no, are we willing to pay the cost of providing this enforcement with our tax dollars?

Does more government involvement necessarily mean better service or more accountability?

I would answer that last question no. Charitable agencies provide better service than government and, in a way, are more accountable.

Which is to say that, if they depend on public donations, they are accountable to their donors. That may be part of the problem.

It becomes a matter of balancing the growing sensitivity to so-called animal rights against the fact property owners also have rights.

It may be necessary for government to get more involved in striking that balance, but it would be better for all concerned if we can keep the state out of it.

Letters to the Editor

Is chamber of commerce backing illegal businesses?

Re: Town should work with owner to keep shop in community, letter by H.M. Johnson, June 8; Town should permit daycare at Main St dog shop, letter by J.J. Castaldi, May 25; No problem if dog daycare wasn't breaking bylaw, letter by Rob McKenzie, May 18.

I was touched to read of the plight of Mr. McKenzie's beloved family pet. Trying to understand groupings of dogs, where aggression and dominance allows one to rise as leader left all day at "daycare" leaves me surprised that Mr. McKenzie's dog is the only one to ever be hurt.

Considering J.J. Castaldi's letter, I find the claims that "the staff just want to help the community in producing better behaved and well-mannered dogs" sheer irony, considering the extent of the injury of Mr. McKenzie's dog.

Mr. Castaldi also alludes dog injuries can happen anywhere among dogs. I agree. It may and often does. However, when it happens out in the community, the dog owner is held accountable and often the dog is quarantined and ultimately destroyed.

Something is wrong when the community supports the aggressor/attacker over the victim, especially when the attack happens within a place of business that may be in contravention of a bylaw.

This brings me to the most recent letter by Mrs. Johnson, president and CEO of the Whitchurch Stouffville Chamber of Commerce. What is the chamber doing supporting a business that is in contravention of a bylaw?

Is a statement being made that the chamber

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will support businesses in our community, even if they may be illegal?

Maybe we need doggie daycares, maybe we don't. Maybe they'd be better suited for farm-like properties or acreages where there is space for multiple-fenced areas to sort dogs by size or temperament and to let them run rather than cram them into our Main Street.

Before the town proceeds with allowing dog daycares, I believe due diligence is necessary. Research into the requirements/guidelines of operating a doggie daycare in a manner that affords minimal risk to all dogs in attendance should be undertaken by the town.

K9 in Kahoots or any other dog daycare should be forced to conform to any such guidelines. This research could start right here in Stouffville.

It would be great to hear from others whose dogs may have had a negative experience in a dog daycare.

Also it may be helpful to hear if, in fact, other dogs have sustained injury while in a local dog daycare facility.

KATHY MOYER
STOUFFVILLE

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