

**IN OTHER WORDS**

Columns and Letters to the Editor

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## With bells on

**I** DON'T USUALLY struggle with words.

Usually, they come fairly easy to me. I feel lucky in that sense.

But this week, I hit a wall. It was a unique challenge I was trying to comprehend; I had both too many words, and no words at all.

It started with the protest in Haliburton on Sept. 20. It was a nation-wide march, which joined together under the guise of caring about children. The irony of the matter was that these individuals paraded around town with their Maple Leaves while suffocating the rights of the children growing up in our community. Bullies with their bells on.

But that's just my opinion.

Mine and over a hundred other counter-protestors who lined the paths of Head Lake Park in an attempt to offer solidarity to those who were targeted by the bullies. The counter protest was formed less than 48 hours before the event; and still had both in-person and online support from across the community.

And as I watched these "protestors" wave signs about "science" and "education", I listened as the counter-protestors were chanting the same things.

Because the crux of the issue is awareness. The "protestors" believe that the school systems are corrupting their kids when educating them about trans rights, 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, and honouring children living their authentic and true selves.

On the flip side, the counter-protestors believe that education is a basic human right, learning about all walks of life is crucial, and celebrating similarities and differences is the path towards

acceptance.

Both sides were pushing the need for education. But one side slaps your wrist if you colour outside the lines, while the other takes your hand and holds it; through the good and the bad, the questions and the doubt, the complexities and the colours.

I'm not going to tell you which side is right for your child. You can decide.

Children are the future. They are the ones who will care for us as we age, who will assume the burden of our deteriorating climate, who will pave the way for civilization as we know it.

And the irony of this protest hinging on "protecting children" when the core of the whole movement is to tell kids they can't learn, squash the dreams they may have, and tell them they can't be who they really are? Well, that just seems counterintuitive.

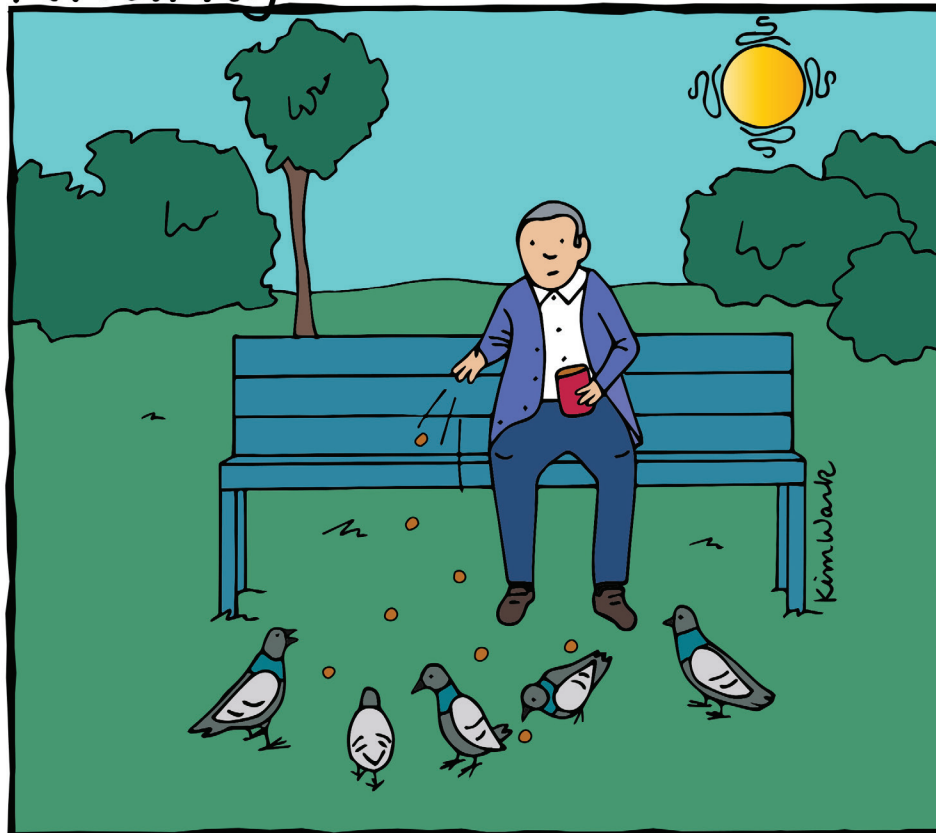
Right before I arrived at the protest, I had come from an appointment. I had just heard the five month heartbeat of the little human I am growing. And as I watched the bullies and the counter-protestors chant back and forth, I held my stomach, and felt a little wobble.

Because protecting our children isn't about who can yell the loudest. It's about who shows up, who includes them, who listens to them, and who loves them - no matter who they become, who they grow into, and who they love.

And while it's heartbreaking to know my child will be born into a world where there will be people who will slap his wrist for colouring outside the lines, I know there will be others there, just to hold his hand, and celebrate him for exactly who he is. Every step of the way. With bells on.

**EMILY STONEHOUSE**  
Editor

## Kwarky

*"Pennies? They're worth less than breadcrumbs."*

## Dogless days

**"D**ON'T LOOK at me like that," I said. "It's not like I am leaving you forever."

Lord knows she tried to keep a positive demeanour, but the truth of it is all I could see was the hurt in her eyes when I said I was leaving for a few days of hunting.

"I'd really love to take you with me," I said, quite truthfully. "But where I am going is no place for a girl as beautiful, polite, and civil as you."

It was true. I was going to duck camp.

Nonetheless, Rosie, my hard-charging springer spaniel, continued to stare me down and then sigh. I guess heartbroken would be the best way to describe her demeanour. And mine too.

We both knew it was a good place for her in many ways. After all, it was a place where we could hunt, and she could hone her waterfowling skills. The only issue was that my 86-year-old uncle was coming to camp, and I figured Rosie's high energy levels might be a bit much for him.

So, I decided to leave my best friend and hunting dog behind.

"You have no idea how much I am going to miss you," I said.

Just then, Jenn walked in and said, "Are you talking to me?"

"Uh ... sure," I replied. "Yes, definitely."

I swear to God, Rosie rolled her eyes.

"That's sweet. I'll miss you too," Jenn said. But her body language - I think it was the animated skipping - hinted otherwise.

I patted Rosie on top of her head and said, "Look, the hunting season is just

beginning. We will have many more opportunities. I'm only going to be gone for five days. After that, you and I are going to have our best season ever."

But in my heart of hearts, I knew she did the math and determined that this was 35 days in dog time.

So I picked up my shotgun and waders and loaded them in the car while Rosie walked sadly beside me. Then I loaded up my gear, sleeping bag, and ammunition. And with every trip to the vehicle, it got a little sadder.

Soon, big brown eyes started to well up and tear. And I think Rosie's did too.

"I promised myself I was not going to cry," I said.

Jenn chose that moment to walk in again. Then she said, "It's OK. Rosie and I will be alright. I might even take her to the dog groomers and get her hair clipped and maybe even get a cute bow in her hair. Oh, and have her nails done ..."

"I'm taking her with me!" I yelled. "She's coming with me!"

"But I thought your uncle ..."

Sadly, Jenn was right again - and I told her so. Rosie, who was definitely aloof by now, just went to her crate and lay down.

When I got to camp, my cousin Dan was sad too. For he had also left his dog behind.

"I wouldn't feel so bad, except for the fact that Sandra's threatening to take her to the spa and get her hair and nails done. She was even talking about getting her a ribbon."

"It's only 5 days," I said.

But we both knew the dogs were right. It kind of felt like 35.

**STEVE GALEA**  
Beyond 35