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Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump speaks during a news conference in West Palm Beach, Fla., on March 5, 2016. (AP)

Let Trump have his say

By now, most people around the world have made up their mind about Donald Trump. Some stand with him; it appears many more stand against him.

We're all entitled to our opinions, thankfully.

Like most people, I have significant concerns about a lot of Trump's rhetoric. But I am equally, maybe even more, troubled by the movement to silence him.

There is a growing and troubling trend to try to shout down, ban or silence anything we don't agree with. We saw this at the Trump rally in Illinois and we see it increasingly on college campuses. The people who claim to be beacons of tolerance are proving to be anything but. If you ask me, that has a lot to do with Trump's recent success.

If you believe, as I do, that the best ideas win out in the end, you should have no trouble with Mr. Trump getting his time to speak his mind. Ultimately, I believe he will not prevail.

We can't make ideas go away simply by silencing them. Exercise your right to peaceful protest and your civic duty to stand up openly against ideas you don't believe in. But, please, don't do it by denying other people their right to express their ideas. It's unbecoming of our democracy.

Joel Stoddart, New Minas

'Ditch this clown'

Bruce MacKinnon hit the nail on the head again with his cartoon of the Trumpster's gas-can head (March 17). Electing the ultimate ugly American would be a harsh reality wake-up for everyone, even Republicans.

May Americans rise above the world's expectations and ditch this clown.

Winn Nicholson, Pugwash

Free-speech-free zone

Protesters must be free to speak their minds. But a line was crossed in Chicago when they stormed Donald Trump's scheduled rally, intimidated those in attendance, resorted to occasional violence and ultimately forced cancellation of the event.

Several of the protesters attend the University of Illinois, the rally's location, and are symptomatic of the disrespect accorded to free speech on too many university campuses, those once-great beacons of liberty which have sadly metamorphosed into incubators of political correctness and its progeny, censorship.

Luminaries including Condoleezza Rice and Ayaan Hirsi Ali were recently shunned at campuses south of the border, while many, including MP Stephen Woodworth, journalist Christie Blatchford, professor Janice Fiamengo, Ann Coulter and Benjamin Netanyahu suffered similar fates in Canada, as have right-to-life groups routinely denied freedom-of-expression rights at campuses on both sides of the border.

More speech, including constructive counter-argument, is a preferred alternative to censorship, which implies offended parties are intellectually incapable of constructing counter-arguments or too intellectually lazy to bother trying.

Kris Larsen, Halifax

Confronting 'biomassacre'

Down here on St. Margaret's Bay, the Department of Natural Resources has decided to open up for clear-cut 385 hectares of former Bowater-Mersey lands.

These lands are in the heart of the famous St. Margaret's District. They are in the middle of a heavily used recreation area, across the road from the Old Annapolis Hiking Trail, opposite the popular Boy Scout Camp on Sandy Lake, between two protected areas with mature stands of red spruce.

Last year, with a deaf ear to community protest, DNR did the same thing along Ingram River, the bay's major nutrient pump.

Efforts by people of the bay to establish a community forest on these lands were flatly rejected by DNR. Efforts by residents to participate in other ways in management of our district were also marginalized and dismissed, despite backing from Halifax's mayors and councillors, more than 60 prominent NGOs and community organizations and hundreds of residents and taxpayers.

Now, a Bay-based anti-biomassacre petition has 27,000 signers. A Healthy Forests Coalition is gathering force to get the government to change course. Join forces with it, spread the word and together we may be able to turn this thing around.

Geoff Le Boutillier, Glen Haven

New schools needed?

Graham Johnston has made important points regarding the new school being built in Tatamagouche. With declining enrolment and closures in every area of Nova Scotia, all new construction must be questioned.

It is my understanding there are five new schools in the budget next year. It may be time to revise those decisions in the interest of more practical use of educational finances.

Jean Matheson, Toney River

Dying with dignity

In her March 16 op-ed, Doris Gates makes note of a recommendation of Parliament's special joint committee on physician-assisted dying: that only competent patients diagnosed with a condition which will ultimately lead to grievous and irremediable suffering should be allowed to make an advance request for aid in dying.

The individual would be able to outline the specific circumstances under which they no longer want to continue living, and the request could be carried out when the patient is no longer competent.

This recommendation is promising, as it would ensure choice for Canadians who have been diagnosed with dementia, a condition that robs patients of their ability to speak for themselves.

However, it's unclear about how it could apply to Canadians who are at high risk of a having heart attack or stroke — conditions that regularly leave patients incapacitated — but who may not have a formal diagnosis.

Here's my answer to how we can help. I encourage everyone to review all 21 recommendations in the joint committee's report. Then, make your views known to your MP and others in government who will be making historic decisions on assisted dying.

You can use Dying With Dignity Canada's [email-a-representative tool \(http://www.dyingwithdignity.ca/email_your_mp\)](http://www.dyingwithdignity.ca/email_your_mp).

I have written my MP, the prime minister and justice minister asking whether the joint committee recommendation will apply to Canadians who are genetically pre-disposed to conditions like heart disease and diabetes.

Their suffering is predictable, too, so they should know what steps they can take to avoid it.

Sheila Sperry, Dartmouth, co-ordinator, N.S. chapter, Dying with Dignity Canada

Container conundrum

I fail to understand why Transport Minister Geoff MacLellan would endorse the possibility of a second container terminal in Nova Scotia when the current ones in Halifax are not even fully occupied.

A terminal in Sydney would only compete with ones in Halifax. For either port to be competitive with the likes of Saint John, Montreal or Toronto, the cost needs to be lower and delivery faster.

If a vessel can shave off the time of steaming down and up the St. Lawrence, have a fast turn-around in port and not spend more money delivering containers, Halifax and/or Sydney would stand a chance.

Containers used to travel via Saint John or Boston when the St. Lawrence Seaway was closed for the winter. This cost shippers more money.

Provinces other than Quebec now participate in keeping the St. Lawrence navigable in winter, taking container traffic away in winter months from Saint John or Halifax, both naturally ice-free ports.

Last but not least: the Chinese are very good at getting people excited with their plans, but in the end the sacrifices and the money will come from Nova Scotia, not from China.

Willem Waltman, Three Fathom Harbour

Suicide prevention

Suicide is a preventable problem. Scientific evidence points toward several viable suicide prevention strategies.

We need to improve family physicians' ability to detect and help people at risk for suicide (e.g., by providing education on treating depression).

And we need to require responsible media coverage of suicide (e.g., by eliminating glamorization of suicide).

We also need to limit access to common means for suicide (e.g., by legislating control over firearms).

And we need to improve access to care for people who attempt suicide (e.g., cognitive-behavioral therapy reduces suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts).

But most of all, we need a government willing to implement what actually works in suicide prevention, as politicking, apologies, an rhetoric do not represent suicide prevention strategies.

Dr. Simon B. Sherry, Halifax, Associate professor, Department of psychology and neuroscience, Dalhousie University
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