



Photo by Jeremy McKay

## Happy Flag Day!

Ralph Saint-Dic, 23, holds a Canadian flag on a crisp afternoon on Loyalist College campus grounds. Saint-Dic has immigrated from Port-au-Prince, Haiti two years and is now a permanent resident. Saint-Dic is a culinary arts student at Loyalist College by day and at night works as a line cook in Belleville. Saint-Dic enjoys Canada and the opportunities it offers. This Sunday is National Flag Day. The flag celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. For more photos, story and a multi-media version, see page

## Not everyone happy with inclusive language promotion

By Gabrielle Smith

Posters that promote inclusive speech have proven controversial in public schools across the board.

Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board's equity and inclusivity committee distributed the posters in September 2012, but only in the last week have parents started really making a stir.

The six posters offer more inclusive alternatives to commonly used terms referencing race, appearance, age, ability, socio-economic class, religion, sexuality, and gender. The intention is noble, but many parents believe the posters have

taken it too far – one in particular that suggests alternatives to gendered terms, including using “partner” or “spouse” rather than husband or wife.

Kerry Donnell, communications officer for the HPEDSB, defended the committee's action, explaining the intent of the posters.

“The equity and inclusivity committee consists of a wide range of individuals from various walks of life, various backgrounds, various ages. It is the mandate of the committee to promote inclusive and welcoming environments at schools.”

Donnell also explained that the posters were an action the committee took based

on references provided by the ministry of education.

Kevin Crosbie, who has two children at Queen Victoria school, said he believes the push for inclusive language is over-the-top.

“People should stop being so sensitive about things. It seems everyone is so sensitive about everything these days. To me, there are much more important issues to be worrying about.”

“If they're trying to respect all sexes and religions, that's great, but at the same time, you need to respect people's preferences. If it's somebody's preference to be referred to as mom or dad, you should

respect that.”

Crosbie also expressed concerns with the suggestion that kids should use adults' first names, rather than formal Mr. and Mrs. titles.

“There's a reason you use Mr. and Mrs. You don't call your teacher by their first name. It's disrespectful.”

Julie Worden, whose daughter is in kindergarten at Queen Victoria, expressed similar concerns.

“I don't see how it would affect anyone. It doesn't make sense to me. I don't see the need.”

“When I was in school, it was so much less strict. I just don't understand. It's like the Happy Holidays versus Merry Christ-

mas thing. Whatever, you know? No one should take offense.”

Donnell said she wanted to make clear to parents who disagree with the ideas on the posters that the inclusive language ideas aren't being enforced or taught in the classroom. They are placed around the school and meant to provide awareness.

“They are not part of the Ontario curriculum. The content of the posters is not being taught in class, so children are not learning to refer to their teachers by their first name, and they're not learning to call someone Mr. or Mrs. The posters are meant for awareness.”

## Kids get to read to four-legged friends

### St. John Ambulance therapy dogs help reluctant readers

By Franki Ikeman

Children who have a hard time reading have the opportunity to spend 15 minutes reading to a trained therapy dog twice a week at the Belleville Public Library.

Paws for Reading is a program that is run by St. John Ambulance. It is aimed at helping children who are reluctant to read or have a hard time reading to feel safe, secure, and not judged by reading to a trained therapy dog.

“It's to help children that have a hard time reading and then, if they feel like they're reading to the dog, then they don't have to feel so insecure about say reading to mom and dad or reading to a teacher. So that way they can pet the dog and you help them sound out the words but pretend that it's the dog helping them so it just de-stresses reading,” said Julie Empey.

Empey is a therapy dog handler at St. John Ambulance. She and Charlie, her three-year-old St. Bernard/Swiss Mountain dog cross, have just started working with the children's programs, but have been doing other therapeutic programs for two years.

The program runs on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. and is usually well attended. The feedback from the program is positive, and kids look forward to coming to read to a furry friend every week.

Jennifer Johnson brings her daughter Nora, 11, every week. Nora has a learning disability and Johnson says that this program helps and motivates her with reading.

“I find it really helpful. I find it motivates her to read. So she'll take out a book every



Photo by Franki Ikeman

Nora Johnson, 11, reads to Charlie, a therapy dog from St. John Ambulance, at the Belleville Public Library. This was Johnson's third time at the Paws For Reading program.

week and practice all week and then the next week take out another book.

I think it motivates her,” said Johnson. Nora was all smiles after reading *Go Dog Go* by P.D Eastman to Charlie on Tuesday afternoon.

“She's a reluctant reader, she struggles with it, so it's a really good program for kids who

are reluctant to read. It just motivates them to want to come. It makes it a positive experience too. The dogs, I think help relax them,” said Johnson.

“A lot of times, reading out loud can be a little bit intimidating and this makes it a little bit easier. No mistakes, the dog doesn't notice.”

## Right to strike now in constitution

By Andrew Meade

A Supreme Court of Canada ruling passed on Jan. 30, 2015 has turned out to be a home run for unions challenging the Saskatchewan provincial government's laws governing employees' right to strike.

Legislation passed by the Saskatchewan Party after taking power in 2007 made it necessary that employers and unions must agree on which workers and services are deemed essential and unable to legally strike. If unable to come to a decision on whether or not a worker is essential, the law sided with the government to choose.

Sharon DeSousa, regional executive vice-president of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, says that the ruling shows that the law was unconstitutional and undemocratic.

“To sum it up, what it does is enshrine the right to strike as a constitutionally protected right,” says DeSousa.

“It's an important victory for all workers as it says that they have a right to progress workers' rights in the workplace. If they are unhappy, they have a right to withdraw their labour. That is the only tool that the workers only have.”

The ruling of the Supreme Court in Saskatchewan Federation of Labour vs. Saskatchewan is not just a provincial issue. The precedent that it sets will have a direct effect on labour laws put in place by the federal Conservative party's Bill C-4, put into law last fall.

The omnibus budget bill C-4 also places the decision of a worker's status as essential or not with the government, not by consultation with unions. This unilateral decision-making process effectively strips workers' unions the ability to argue, negotiate or provide analysis of that type of essential agreement.

The definition of what services are deemed essential varies between levels of government.

It's different for every level of government. The guidelines and definitions are different depending on which level of government you are talking about. Sometimes it's the safety of the public, protecting the health and safety of the Canadian public, DeSousa says.

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