# Non-offensive movement hinders freedoms

**MARK PAVILONS**

I am proud to be part of this great Canadian society we share.

I also love enjoying the benefits of my home community of Caledon, and my adopted home of King.

The unique, caring and dedicated residents often give me cause to pause, reflect and take comfort in my fellow human beings.

That feeling of security and unity, are quickly dashed when I hear or see deeds, actions and speeches that deflate all that is good in our rainbow coloured balloon.

Alas, there are times when I feel quite embarrassed to be part of the human race, or at least the part that has become the whiny, sucky babies, and no, that's not the name of a new boy band.

The masses, in the privileged western world, are quickly becoming overly sensitive, whiny, dumb and self-absorbed, to the point where I question the sustainability of our future. After all, the 20-somethings today will be the political leaders, entrepreneurs and movers and shakers of tomorrow.

It's sad that the political correctness of the day has become so prevalent that most of us are afraid to utter anything that could be perceived as incorrect. Talk about constantly walking on egg shells.

I?was around when political correctness took off in this province, and I?remember reading a small booklet entitled ?Words that Count Women Out/In.? It was published in 1992 by the Ontario Women's Directorate (now the Office of Women's Issues). Its aim was to encourage gender-inclusive language, noting ?bias-free language is effective language.? Intense media coverage following the distribution of this publication resulted in the need for a second edition only two months after the publication's launch.

I fully appreciated the movement to rid our language of sexist terms, in an attempt to foster female empowerment and gender equality. And perhaps the male-dominated society needed a bit of a kick in the groin as a collective wake-up call.

Fast-forward to 2020 and we're at the point where our speech, the written word, and every action is under intense scrutiny.

In a newspaper office we freely discuss and debate every issue, regardless of how sensitive it is. But I imagine in other corporate environments, it's verboten to talk about sexual orientation, marital status, income disparity, diet and weight, hair colour ??pretty much anything that can be construed as personal, racist or sexist.

How do we continue to act as social human beings when we're so restricted by societal chains??We will soon become a flock of heads-down, silent sheep; robots going about our daily routine?

Our typically Canadian tendencies to accommodate everyone, offend no one and please all, can interfere in our progress. How?

Well, taken too far, ?correctness? or neutral, non-offensive directives, can actually impinge our rights and freedoms. They can skew accuracy and lead to vague generalities.

Public outcry in recent years has managed to shut down many talks, events, public speeches and presentations, all in the name of political correctness.

Rush Linbaugh (granted not the best source) said everybody's scared to death of political correctness. Others, like Gary Oldman, believe political correctness has become a ?straightjacket.?

Simon Cowell, known to speak his mind, said he simply ?loathes??political correctness. Mel Gibson finds this form of correctness ?intellectual terrorism? and Hal Holbrook said it causes people to be silent, instead of saying what's on their minds.

What I'm getting at here goes beyond the concept of inclusivity and tolerance. It's a matter of impacting free speech and even, dare I say, freedom of the press. These are fundamental cornerstones of our society and our democracy, things we fought very hard to preserve and protect.

What we have to do, as Anthony D'Angelo once said, is ?transcend political correctness and strive for human righteousness.?

I'm sure at some point, the need for correctness will wane, as we come together, evolve as a society and abandon any offensive thinking. Hopefully.

I?also detest the attempts of political correctness to rewrite history.

The swastika, confederate flag, statues of slave owners and former presidents and prime ministers are all symbols from our tainted history. Removing them from view can't erase the past. Why would we want to??We need to learn from these things to progress. ?We all recognize them for what they are.

Across North America, protesters have succeeded in silencing free speech through a combination of media pressure, inflated security costs, boycotts, riots and violence against speakers.

In 2002, rampaging Palestinian-supporting students engineered the shutdown of a speech at Concordia University in Montreal by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Writer Meghan Murphy, who argued that trans rights and feminism were in opposition, found that threats against her by activists forced Simon Fraser University security officials to move her speech to a secret location.

The University of British Columbia cancelled a booking by the Free Speech Club ?in order to safeguard the safety and security of our community.?

Giving in to what's become known as the ?heckler's veto,??gives unfair power to opponents and curbs free and fulsome discussion.

Protesters showed up in 2018 at Queen's University to interfere with a lecture about free speech by Jordan Peterson.

Woodrow Lloyd, former Saskatchewan premier, once said: ?Education needs courage. The very fact that education, if it is vital, leads to purposeful change, indicates the need for courage on the part of those who lead, because even purposeful change is always opposed. It is opposed by those who do not understand.?

Canadian institutions ??the birthplace of thought and innovation ? need to find courage.

?If threats of violence, commercial boycotts or expressions of feelings hurt by unpopular ideas result in the silencing of unfettered discussion, we all suffer,? said historian Gerry Bowler.

The foundation of democracy is the exchange of opinions.

Let's leave the taps on, and let the ideas flow. Let's strive for righteousness.