

Parents opposed to HPV vaccine for exactly the wrong reasons



SCOTT
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“An HPV vaccine simply isn’t the same as rolling out the welcome mat for sexual activity, any more than a tetanus vaccine encourages kids to play tag in junkyards or seats belts condone street racing. It’s simply another health concern that can be addressed before it becomes a life-changing tragedy.”

I generally do my best to step out of the conversation when things turn to religion. I think what one chooses to believe—or not to believe—is a private matter that I really don’t wish to discuss. Plus, on a more selfish note, it quickly gets tiring to listen to the long sermons from the holier-than-thou types, or the equally annoying “I’m too smart for superstition” lectures from the other side.

Regardless of what I might say after a pint or six, I’m not all-knowing on all matters. I’d really rather just believe what I think is right, and leave others to do the same.

That said, there are some times where both sides of the debate need to take a step back and scale down the zealotry. Secular activists who foam at the mouth at the hint of anything religious is one example. And times when common sense and logic are tossed out the window in the name of religious ideology and wishful thinking, such as in the case of some Ontario schools, is another.

In a disturbingly close 4–3 vote, the Halton Catholic District school board decided not to ban public health officials from administering a vaccine for human papillomavirus (HPV). The vaccine has been shown to be extremely effective in

protecting against the four strains of HPV that cause the vast majority of cervical cancer cases in Canada. The Ontario government has joined several other provinces in adding the vaccine to the list of those administered to school-aged children, as it’s most effective when given to girls before they become sexually active.

Some of those who supported the ban—school board trustees and parents alike—cited concerns over the long-term side effects of the vaccine: questions that are not only valid to ask, but essential. The Ontario government certainly jumped the gun when it came to approving the vaccine, as the Canadian Immunization Committee has not yet made a recommendation on its safety. As well, new drug trials and accounts are beginning to show that serious complications can arise because of the vaccine. Others point out that there are treatments in development that might provide better protection from more strains of HPV.

However, many of those that were calling for the ban were less concerned with the physical consequences, and more with what message may be sent by allowing the vaccines. Some argue that the mere act of allowing the vaccines is implicitly condoning promiscuity.

Such an argument, unfortunately, is utter horseshit. An HPV vaccine simply isn’t the same as rolling out the welcome mat for sexual activity, any more than a tetanus vaccine encourages kids to play tag in junkyards or seats belts condone street racing. It’s simply another health concern that can be addressed before it becomes a life-changing tragedy.

Sure, as abstinence-education supporters are always repeating, refraining from sex also protects against STDs, but there comes a point where one has to face up to reality: Teenagers have sex. It’d be just wonderful if they could all be sexually responsible, but let’s be honest with ourselves: adolescence isn’t a period that’s known for level-headed, reasoned judgement—not to mention the fact that all the abstinence education in the world can’t protect against sexual assault or marrying someone already infected with HPV.

Demand more research on possible side effects. Look at alternatives. Encourage kids to think before jumping into bed with someone. That’s all dandy. But don’t stick your heads in the sand and wish you lived in a world where kids don’t have sex. Because that’s not education; it’s not even spiritual guidance. It’s just denial. And it can be deadly.

Canadian dollar’s power-level over 9000

Well, technically it’s at 98.5 cents US, but the fact remains that we’re kicking ass



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new trading routes. One perk of global warming is that the Northwest passage is gradually opening up more and more, creating a brand new trading route with other nations in the world. Outside the US, Canada’s biggest trading partners are Japan and Britain.

Cold War, and a stereotype that no longer stands up. They’re stretching their resources too thin, dealing with internal problems while trying to battle external ones.

But just because we’re right next door doesn’t mean we have to fuel such an unstable structure. I’m not talking about cutting all trade ties, but exploring new trading opportunities seems wiser than watching as the American economy collapses in on itself, dragging us down with it.

You could argue that NAFTA is more than enough reason to stick it out—after all, we’re getting tariff-free trading with only a border to cross. But with the US not really holding up to their end of the bargain (despite Canada winning its case in the NAFTA tribunal, the Americans have yet to relinquish their duty tax on Canadian softwood lumber exports), this doesn’t inspire the greatest confidence in our border-pals—especially with America’s dollar dropping like it’s hot. It seems like a desperate grab at trying to sustain themselves by using Canada—as we can’t just cut them off—to help uphold their superpower image.

Canada’s way too dependent on trading with a nation that hasn’t built a bridge over its own troubled waters. As our dollar rises to equal their own, the timing seems perfect to start exploring new countries to increase trade with, so that if something genuinely catastrophic happened south of the border, we wouldn’t go down too. Those who fear the dollar’s rise have got to learn to stop worrying and love the loonie.

But now that the US has to pay almost one-to-one, they’ll start to explore less costly trading partners—except for the fact that what they primarily need from us is our oil, and where else are they going to get it? Iraq?

However, with a more northern trade route, Russia and Scandinavia become viable future trading partners. And with the loonie looking better than ever, Canada’s in a great position to return the favour and start importing new goods.

In fact, America’s spot as our ideal trading partner is starting to fade. Setting the long, unguarded border aside, the Land of the Free is in crisis mode, racking up monumental amounts of debt while struggling on social levels as a country of divided ideals. Their status as the sheriff in town is a holdover from the

As the loonie grows in strength, it becomes an easier task to establish

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