

## Protest group spreading misinformation



By Bill Kilpatrick

Despite handing out pamphlets at the 1 Million March 4 Kids protest that informed those who were protesting at Millennium Park that they should not "engage with counter protestors," one of the organizers of the Bancroft March 4 Kids, Wilma Brethour, speak with demonstrators at the counter protest that was being held in support of transgender youth in downtown Bancroft on Oct. 21. Brethour did not get very far into the counter protest before she began engaging with a gay couple about why she was protesting. She was challenged about some of the messages that the protest was sending regarding 2SLGBTQIA+ people. After listening to those present it was clear they believed that the 1 Million March 4 Kids is anti-2SLGBTQIA+. In one exchange Brethour explained that her group is against sexually explicit material being available to underage children, but in the handout that was given out at the first 1 Million March 4 kids on Sept. 20, they claimed to be for the "elimination of the SOGI or Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity curriculum, pronouns, gender ideology, and mixed bathrooms in schools?..? Further on in the handout it stated that the group is also against the "sexualization of children, grooming, and the undermining of parents rights." These are not the same things, but it appears that they are being presented together as if they are all connected. But are they? And if so, how? What exactly is the 1 Million March 4 Children about, and is the information that they are providing accurate and reliable? In this article Bancroft This Week will examine some of the information from the 1 Million March 4 Children that was distributed at the protest in an attempt to better understand what this movement is about, what they believe is happening, and what exactly do they want? On the cover of the pamphlet it says "protect children from indoctrination and sexualization," but what kind of indoctrination and sexualization are they referring? The first two pages of the pamphlet begin by asking those reading it, "Do YOU know WHAT your children are being taught in school? RE: Health? Sex Education?" The pamphlet then encourages the readers to "take a look at Ontario's Sex Ed Curriculum," but instead of quoting the actual Ontario curriculum in its entirety, the pamphlet quotes the curriculum as seen through the eyes of the right-wing pro-life Christian organization called the Campaign Life Coalition. Bancroft This Week went to the link that was provided and noticed that something was wrong. The Campaign life Coalition was critiquing the 2015 Ontario Curriculum and not the updated 2019 curriculum, thus making the information on the pamphlet misleading as it has all changed. It also appears that the Campaign Life Coalition cherry picked specific parts of the curriculum and did not take them into the context that was provided on the Ontario Curriculum webpage. For example, under the heading, "Grade 1 (age 6): Genitalia and Consent" the pamphlet reads: "graphic lesson on sexual body parts including 'penis,' 'testicles,' 'vagina' and 'vulva.'" However, under section D1.3 on page 105 of the Ontario curriculum it reads: "By the end of Grade 1, students will: identify body parts, including genitalia (e.g., penis, testicles, vagina, vulva), using correct terminology and body-positive language [A1.5 Self] Teacher prompt: We talk about all body parts with respect, and we decide who can touch our body. Why is it important to know about your own body, and use correct names for the parts of your body?" Student: "All parts of my body are a part of me, and I need to know how to take care of

and talk about my own body. If someone touches me anywhere that I don't want them to, or if I'm hurt or need help, I need to know the right words for the parts of my body, so that when I tell a trusted adult about what's happened, they will know what I'm talking about.'?This does not appear to be indoctrination, sexualization, or grooming, in fact it appears to be the opposite of grooming as it empowers children to exercise their bodily autonomy and to tell a trusted adult when someone touches them somewhere they don't want them to. The cherry picking by the Campaign Life Coalition along with the placing of the curriculum out of context continued throughout the pamphlet. The pamphlet makes the claim that 'The Ontario Physical and Health Education Association partnered with a 'sex education expert' called Sexpressions which offered explicit, classroom teaching aids like 'The guide to getting it on book.'? While the book does indeed exist it's not clear that the book has ever been used in any classroom in Canada. The only sources available that reference this claim come from a right-wing religious blog called Everyday for Life Canada and the Campaign Life Coalition. Everyday for life Canada also contained debunked COVID-19 conspiracy theories and end time predictions. None of the hyper link sources worked, there were no author's cited, and it referred to the 2015 curriculum and not the 2019 curriculum. The Campaign Life Coalition article was from 2013 and very out of date. Many of the hyperlinks did not work nor were any authors cited. They indeed cite Sexpressions as a community partner, but give no evidence that their book, The guide to getting it on book, has ever been used in a classroom setting. The Campaign Life Coalition article does talk about an issue that has been raised by the 1 Million March 4 Children and that is when kids should be exposed to sex education. The article stated that parent's, 'concern[s]' would be more accurately described as the possibility that explicit sex ed, being pushed down to such early grades, will get children thinking about sexual activity at too early an age. Parents are concerned about triggering sexual confusion and early experimentation.? This is not an unreasonable worry, which begs the question: when do humans begin thinking about and acting in a sexual manner? The answer to this should dictate when those same humans should start to be educated about sexuality and sexual health. According to an article by the American Academy of Pediatrics, children begin exhibiting 'sexual' behaviours as early as two years of age. The article points out that these behaviours are 'not sexually motivated. They typically are driven by curiosity and attempts at self-soothing,' but involve behaviours such as 'Touching/rubbing genitals in public or private, looking at or touching a peer's or sibling's genitals, showing genitals to peers, standing or sitting too close to someone, or trying to see peers or adults naked.'? These behaviours are common and a normal part of development in children ages two to six, which means that age appropriate discussions about sexual behaviours should be happening as soon as these behaviours are observed, according to the article. The article goes on to give 10 tips for body safety and boundaries which included tips that closely align with the Ontario Curriculum such as, 'Teaching children proper names for all body parts, including their genitals: 'penis, vagina, breasts and buttocks. Making up names for body parts may give the impression that they are bad or a secret and cannot be talked about. Also, teach your child which parts are 'private,' those usually covered by a swim suit, and should not be looked at or touched without their permission.'? The article further addresses some myths concerning sexuality such as the myth that, 'Caregivers often assume that self-stimulatory behavior such as masturbation must have been taught, suggesting that the child was sexually abused. This is not the case. Children simply find their genitals, recognize that stimulating them feels good and continue to engage in the behavior.'? Sexuality, or rather behaviour involving sex organs, begins at a very early age and it appears that education about it should as well. The pamphlet made claims about the World Health Organization and the United Nations regarding the sexualization of children stating that those organizations have said that, 'children must have sexual partners,' a claim that was debunked by the news agency Reuters. The website that is cited in the pamphlet as the source of this claim also claims that children are being sexualized and groomed so they can be sexually abused by the elites and then sacrificed to Satan, which is a Q-Anon conspiracy that has been thoroughly debunked. The pamphlet lists numerous books that it claims to be of a sexual nature and that are supposedly available to children in schools, yet it provides no evidence that children are reading them, or how exactly they have been damaged if they have read them. Despite all the misinformation and misleading statements that are made in the pamphlet it does appear to have some good suggestions regarding children's education. Under the section entitled, 'What can you do?' it gives numerous suggestions like 'asking to see your child's text books/ handouts assignments/ links to videos etcetera.'? This appears to be a reasonable idea and a great way for parents to become familiar with what their children are learning. The pamphlet makes another reasonable suggestion regarding the education of children and that is to talk to the teacher and the principal about the curriculum. The 'what can you do?' section also contains some suggestions that appear to have led directly to the misinformation that was printed in the pamphlet like the suggestion to meet people with like minded thinking and to stop watching mainstream media, or in other words, create an echo chamber for your beliefs. After examining all of the information within the pamphlet it was still not clear exactly what the 1 Million March 4 Children stands for or what they want. It does appear that they believe that children are being sexualized too early and that the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity curriculum has something to do with it, but it's not clear how these are connected or how parental rights will correct this issue. They also seem to believe that children are being groomed for pedophiles, but it's also not clear how this is happening or

what ends children are being groomed or for what purpose. Much of this confusion is no doubt a result of their information being either inaccurate, misleading, or unreliable. Brethour was asked multiple times if she had read all the links in the pamphlet or even the Ontario Curriculum prior to it being distributed and her answer was that she had not read all of it. When she was told about the negative impact her misinformation was having on 2SLGBTQIA+ people by people from that community, her response was ?that was not my intent.?