

**Mary Lou Ambrogio, Vice President
International Free Press Society - Canada**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Mary Lou Ambrogio and I am VP of the Canadian chapter of the International Free Press Society, a group dedicated to preserving Free speech. Our parent organization, the Danish Free Press Society, was born out of the Danish Cartoon controversy of 2005. Rioting and deadly violence erupted when a Danish newspaper published cartoons of Mohammed in an effort to test Denmark's tolerance for free speech. Denmark experienced a major fail but don't believe that something is *only* rotten in the state of Denmark. We now have several Free Press chapters around the world and Canada does not provide an exception to the need.

In March 2010, IFPS brought Ann Coulter to Canada. The cancelled Ottawa event made international headlines when bullies chose to silence an opinion they disagreed with. They formed violent mobs to shut down Coulter's appearance. But where were the security forces to protect *her* right to speak, *our* right to have her speak and the rights of those who wanted to *hear her* speak? They were observing neutrality between the lawless and the lawful, as George Jonas said at the time.

This experience found us taking a closer look at Caledonia. We realized that what happened to us was borne out of the same thinking being applied by authorities in Caledonia, where if one group wants to inhibit the rights of others, the authorities will appease the potentially violent group and simply ignore the rights of the law abiding.

If authorities were getting away with selectively applying the rule of law in Caledonia, we knew this could eventually threaten *all* of our freedoms so we began to work with those in Caledonia who were standing up for Rule of Law. We noticed many commonalities as we began connecting the dots with our Caledonia friends.

Working together provided us with an opportunity to witness the OPP's method of peacekeeping firsthand. We were present at the Truth and Reconciliation Rally McHale and Vandermaas attempted to hold in February, 2011. Afterwards, our Communications Director, Al Gretzky

commented, "I didn't feel like I was in Canada". We saw for ourselves how the rule of law had been turned on its head.

During that rally I questioned an OPP officer who was silently observing the madness around him and asked if they were going to do their jobs and enforce the law. He refused to answer. I pressed until he finally spoke. He said, "We're just here to keep the peace ma'am". To hear someone who is supposed to be responsible for law enforcement utter such hollow words amidst the chaos that was erupting around us was truly stunning. "*What peace?*" I wondered. Isn't it necessary to first see that there *is* a "Peace" to "*keep*"?

In addition to a lack of equal law enforcement by the OPP, Caledonia also suffered from a lack of press freedom due to political correctness and political pressure. In a liberal democracy, where we elect those who will represent us, an informed electorate is critical. When some facts are kept out of the newspapers, we deprive people of knowledge they need to make informed choices at the ballot box.

The pressure on media to self-censor stories about Caledonia only worsened the problems and allowed them to drag on longer than they otherwise might have had the people been given those facts.

The Caledonia Regional News, the one media outlet that did not self-censor, found they were then excluded from receiving OPP press releases and lost the county as a source of advertising revenue. *They were punished for telling the truth.*

Outrageously, one of their reporters, Kristin Kaye, was recently assaulted by an OPP officer for doing her job. When a journalist like Kristin is given reason to fear bringing the facts to the people, we should *all* be fearful.

This is the stuff of tinpot dictatorships and it is shocking to know that things like this happened in Caledonia. Ask any despot what the first order of business is when trying to attain and maintain absolute power; control the press.

In addition to informing the electorate, Press Freedom can also be a vital tool in affecting positive change. Every great progress, like women's suffrage and civil rights victories, occurred because people were able to

speak out against injustice and a Free Press then reported the facts. In looking to history, we know that controlling political speech can usher in tyranny and stop freedom and justice dead in its tracks.

In a recent editorial in the Caledonia Regional News, Chris Pickup noted that the cops are trying to keep their jobs and pensions while ignoring the oaths they swore. But, they're just following orders ma'am; orders that come from the politicized top cops who in turn are getting their orders from the McGuinty government.

The McGuinty government failed Caledonians. They ignored their duty to serve the best interests of the public and chose instead to serve special interests. Instead of applying the law equally, they applied it selectively. But the rule of law when applied properly is meant to ensure the rights of *all*, down to the smallest and most vulnerable minority; the individual. The rule of law is meant to protect *all* individuals from arbitrary or uncertain actions by the government yet in Caledonia, it was the *government* that allowed these actions to occur.

The politicians, in failing the people of Caledonia, have failed us all. But what lessons can we take forward from Caledonia? That the rule of law *must* be applied equally, press freedom *must* be protected and race based policing *must end*.