

One step in the right direction

Boundary decision suggests Hamilton does have vision and leadership after all

NANCY HURST

Growing up on the west side of Calgary with the foothills and Rocky Mountains visible from my bedroom window, the sky in the '60s (pre oil boom) was the most brilliant blue and I remember lying on the grass looking up and shuddering at the beauty of it.

Calgary at that time was small, clean and close knit. But as my teen years rolled in, the horses were replaced by McMansions that marched across my beloved foothills. Gone was the city's favourite tobogganing hill and the ranches along with it.

The Grecian blue sky became shrouded in a grey haze that cloaked its brilliance.

Calgary grew exponentially after the oil boom and sprawl stamped across the prairies. At least they had the foresight to build the LRT in the '80s but the city exploded and the sprawling car-dependent suburbs and constant traffic woes grew along with it.

Age 18 saw me and my backpack heading to Europe for the summer.

After travelling extensively in Europe I settled in London, England, and that summer morphed into 18 years. My friends and I squatted (which was legal then) and rented in about 15 different parts of town from Brixton to Shepherds Bush to Notting Hill and I became a local everywhere.

Moving so often, I started to see the common connection that all these boroughs shared — they were each a little village unto themselves.

London taught me that living in close community with my neighbours in truly walkable, bikeable, neighbourhoods was my favourite way to live in a city.

London was the gold star of complete communities. I never owned a car for the first 10 years and never needed one.

We walked or biked to local markets, groceries, banks, schools, cafés and even to work. This is normal in London, a city of 8.9 million people because each neighbourhood has the amenities you need close by.

Fast forward to 2007 Hamilton.

Friends in other provinces were skeptical about our decision to move here, but when I looked up Hamilton on Google I saw magical waterfalls, endless hiking and an escarpment that gave the city texture and uniqueness, as well as little elements of London like Hess and Ottawa Streets. I wasn't deterred by a couple of steel mills, this is Steeltown after all.

I was not disappointed and now Hamilton is home. I've been involved in the campaign to stop the boundary expansion in Hamilton since December.

My deep wish is that alongside saving our precious farmland, together we can build a city that is a leader in Canada in innovative and creative urban planning.

I envision neighbourhoods with mixed types of housing that suit people in all stages of life from young singletons, to families, empty nesters, to older folks looking to downsize.

How awesome would it be, like London, all these people could stay in their own communities and find appropriate housing for each stage of their lives?

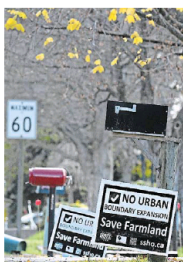
When my own parents downsized from their single family home, they had to leave the neighbourhood where they had built a life and social connections enduring 50 years because there was no place suitable in their neighbourhood.

They were forced to move to a new area of the city and the connection with friends and neighbours that they built over those decades was severed, never to be repaired.

So, when I reflect on the tale of the two cities that have been woven through my history, and about the recent decision to keep our boundary firm, I feel a fluttering of hope that Hamilton is heading in the right direction.

NANCY HURST IS A CO-FOUNDER OF THE CITIZEN ORGANIZATION STOP SPRAWL HAMONT.

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HAMILTON SPECTATOR FILE PHOTO



THOMAS FROESE PHOTO

Hamilton Ticats superfan Paul Cicero at a game against the Montreal Alouettes earlier this season. Cicero, who has seen hundreds of live Ticats games, will be among fans watching the Ticats take on the Alouettes again Sunday at Tim Hortons Field in the CFL East Semi-Final.

Paul Cicero: The Ticats' biggest fan



THOMAS FROESE
OPINION

One day Paul Cicero's dad bought him a Hamilton Tiger-Cats hat and sat the boy in Ivor Wynne Stadium to watch a game. Then TC, the Ticats' mascot, came by, took the hat, and pretended to consume Paul's head, before leading the stadium in a roaring cheer. It was 1987. Paul was six.

It's just one Ticats story — Paul is full of them — that runs deep and alongside stories of Paul's family. They're stories that also give you the feeling that if sports teams, never mind families, have ghosts, then maybe they're nearby.

Paul's father, Charlie, a longtime Hamilton insurance broker, saw about 300 Ticats games, starting shortly after the team was birthed. That was in 1950, after the Hamilton Tigers, a revered football club dating to the 1880s, merged with the Hamilton Wildcats.

Later Charlie took his kids — Paul and his two siblings — to games, but Paul especially loved his place. From age six to 18, he never missed a home game, and only then to go to university.

In 1999, Paul travelled from Hal-

ifax, met up in Toronto with his dad, before the two flew west to watch their beloved Ticats win the Grey Cup in Vancouver.

That was Hamilton's last CFL championship, and a marker of Paul's connection with his father. Charlie Cicero died in 2015, and Paul took over his insurance brokerage. Or, more accurately, Calogero Cicero died. (Charlie had reverted to his birth name after his uncle Calogero, who he was named after, appeared in a dream and asked him what the "Charlie" stuff was all about.)

In 2016, Paul attended every Ticats game, home or away. "I'd never heard of anyone doing it." So he drove and took trains to Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal, and flew to games in Winnipeg, Calgary, Edmonton, Regina and Vancouver. Some 20,000 kilometres later, it became Paul's tribute.

"I got a new appreciation of the travel these guys do. It also gave me the chance to see Canada." When the Ticats learned about superfan Paul Cicero, they had him lead the team on the field for that season's final game. Now a 2016 commemorative jersey is displayed in his home.

Naturally, Paul, who's on a first-name basis at the Ticats store at Tim Hortons Field, has jerseys and gear. Not that everyone understands. Ticats legend Angelo Mosca

— the winner of four Grey Cups as a Ticat who died recently at 84 — once gave Paul's father an old Hamilton jersey of his, Charlie, then a teenager, wore the already-spent jersey into such a threadbare state that his mother, never imagining its value, tossed it.

Then there's Paul's "Nana," his mother's mother, 107 and still in her Stoney Creek home of seven decades. "She reads The Spec every day, and the sports just go by the Ticats news so she can talk to me."

There are more stories. Too many for today's paper. Dates and scores and plays flow easily from Paul's memory. As do names of players, especially locals — Hitchcock and Morreale and Smith among them — like they're old friends. Or what about the live tigers the Ticats would bring, caged, to home games? To rattle opponents. (We're looking at you, Toronto Argos.)

After seeing hundreds of Ticats games, Paul has also collected some memories with opposing fans. (We're still looking at you, Argos). He'd like a few more.

With this year's Grey Cup in Hamilton, on Dec. 12, the Ticats could vie for a national title at home. It's a rarity in football.

First they need to beat Montreal, then Toronto in the CFL Eastern final next weekend.

The Grey Cup remains among Canada's most venerable institutions. This one, the 108th, will ramp up with the Grey Cup's weeklong festival, something even Paul has never attended. It's expected to bring tens of millions of dollars into Hamilton region. Then the game.

And then, who knows? Maybe even a ghost or two will show up.

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Premier Ford is no friend to Ontario's working people

BRAD WALCHUK

Since winning the provincial election in 2018, Doug Ford has been no friend to Ontario's working class. Granted, he was no friend to workers before this, but becoming premier placed in him in a position of power over working-class people, which he regularly uses to pass legislation contrary to their interests.

The Ford government's first major piece of legislation was Bill 47 — the Making Ontario Open for Business Act. Among other things, it amended the Employment Standards Act and removed the entitlement to Personal Emergency Leave — which provided workers with two days of paid leave — and eliminated the right to equal pay for part-time, contract, and temporary workers.

Ford also amended the Labor Relations Act in various ways, including making it harder for workers in the building services, home care, community services, and temporary help agency industries to unionize, and eliminated the requirement for an employer to reinstate a striking employee following six months of being on strike.

In November 2019, Ford passed Bill 124 — the Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act. The legislation im-

posed a series of three-year "moderation periods" on public sector workers. These "moderation periods" are effectively caps on salary and total compensation and limited to one per cent per year.

So on Nov. 2, when a friend of mine living in New Brunswick texted me about two prominent labour leaders standing shoulder-to-shoulder (well, a metre apart) from Premier Ford at a news conference to announce increasing the minimum wage to \$15 per hour, I wondered if someone had invented a time machine and changed the date to April Fool's Day. Did we not already have legislation providing for a \$15 per hour minimum wage back in 2018? That's right, we did, but Ford scrapped it only a few months after being elected!

The twisted reality of Ford's announcement to "increase" the minimum wage back to \$15 per hour is that he already repealed a \$15 per hour minimum wage brought in by a previous government, making Ontario's lowest paid employees work for three years at a rate much lower than they should have been. After all this, he then callously announces an "increase" back up to \$15 per hour to appear as though he is a friend to workers.

Surely, the fact that we are within eight months of another election

has nothing to do with that announcement, right?

On the same day as the announcement of the so-called "increase" to the minimum wage, the living wage rate in Hamilton was updated for the first time since 2019.

Since then, the cost of living has continued to climb. According to the Ontario Living Wage Network, Hamilton's living wage now sits at \$17.20 per hour, up from an hourly rate of \$16.45 in 2019. In Halton Region, that figure is \$20.75 per hour. These figures are well above the minimum wage.

On the day of his announcement, the Ontario Federation of Labour also wondered if Ford was trapped in some sort of a time machine. They cleverly tweeted "Doesn't Doug Ford know Halloween is over? Enough playing dress up as a government that cares about workers."

Workers would be better off if there were a time machine and we could go back to 2018 and change the outcome of the last provincial election.

While that is not possible, workers need to be sure that they do not give Ford another mandate, despite his best efforts to make us forget about the past three years.

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