

LETTERS

Being charged more

We are accustomed to occasional small increases in our cable bill for a variety of contrived reasons. This week, however, we received a notice of two increases: \$6 for our internet package and \$6 for TV package. No reason given, but we are given options of adding, cancelling or modifying our service without penalty. Grocery prices have risen, nor even discuss gas prices or housing and the list goes on. Not sure why we are being charged more when Cogeco profits are definitely not declining. Options?

Marianne Robertson, Dundas

Not taking sides

As a former resident of Hamilton and an avid reader of The Spectator, which has printed many letters condemning Coun. Terry Whitehead, I cannot be persuaded in taking sides. Coun. Whitehead stated he believes those responsible for the many issues Hamilton is facing should be held accountable. Is that not part of a councillor's responsibility?

Arthur A. Alkerton, Oakville

More for Ukraine?

It is time for our country and Europe to do more than send money, weapons and aid to Ukraine. This deadly strike on a shopping mall outside Kyiv is pure horror. Recently, my husband and I returned from volunteering for two weeks in eastern Slovakia. We were in Kosice at the train station (40 kilometres from Ukraine border). Here we helped Ukrainian refugees to board trains with their heavy laden luggage. Where were most going? Now after so many months away, most were returning to western Ukraine. Why, I would often say to myself as we lifted luggage for the grandmothers and young moms onto the trains? They felt it was safe to return. We worried as we saw them leave, what would be there for them on their return? Now, we know, bombs from Russia dropped on shopping malls, innocent people just like you and I.

Lynn Varey, Dundas

Why the charge?

We landed at Glasgow Airport and had four cases and carry-on luggage. We requested assistance as my husband has had a stroke. The porter who helped us was fantastic, he took all our luggage off the carousel and put them on a cart, he escorted us out and to our vehicle, no charge. On our return home was nothing like Glasgow Airport. Again we requested assistance, had a porter who wasn't very happy collect our luggage and take us to the limo pickup. I then handed him a tip. He said, no, it's \$15 plus tax plus tip. How come we get charged at Toronto and no charge at Glasgow?

Margaret Clark, Hamilton

Keep prices down

Perhaps there should be a law that says that the price of certain foods can't rise... (perhaps without applying for special permission to increase price) of basic foods like eggs, butter, milk, sugar, flour, rice, potatoes, canned tuna, certain meats and fruits, maybe even toilet paper. Perhaps a list of items that changes periodically only with (governmental) permission. A new and radical idea, but perhaps a necessary one to maintain proper nutrition and prevent possible hunger among our populace and thereby help food corporations do the right thing as they continue to focus their attention on profits, of which they can get plenty from the processed food side of the business.

Renate Manthel, Hamilton

ER observations

I would like to share how I spent my Father's Day with my dad. He is 92 and lives in long-term care. I received a call at 8 a.m. Sunday morning that my dad had had a fall and was taken to hospital. I arrived to find him badly bruised in the face and arms as well as having a very sore back. Within a couple of hours he was X-rayed had a CT scan and set up in a room to await results. Results take time, which allowed me to observe what is happening in our ERs. I heard many staff asking about a break for which there was no one to relieve them. Staff were asked to stay overtime (after having no or limited breaks) because of how short staffed they were. I heard conversations regarding closing wards to admissions because of lack of staff and over-capacity.

We need to hold our provincial government to task for this because their plan is to destroy what we have to allow for privatization. Call or email your MPP today.

Don Holland, Hamilton

Ford a Monty Python fan?

Interesting supposition. I didn't know Doug Ford was a Monty Python fan. If one checks the list of our new cabinet ministers, there is a Minister of Red Tape Reduction. This is not a spoof. It's real. I wish it could be a case of "This parrot is not dead, it's only sleeping." (With thanks to Monty Python for paraphrasing the idea.) I think we should suggest an additional ministry to the premier — the Ministry of Silly Walks. Makes about as much sense as what happened in the hot sun of Queen's Park. Maybe they all had sunstroke and will finally recover their limited senses.

Art French, Hamilton



CARLA FROESE

Spectator contributor Thomas Froese with his daughter, Liz, at the corner of Portage and Main in Winnipeg Man., in 2021. Reflecting on Canada, he writes: "To hold a Canadian passport, then? To sing 'Oh Canada,' with your own unique voice? Good God, we're in a good place."

Getting to know our nation's soul



THOMAS FROESE
OPINION

One summer day, my eldest and I took a selfie at the corner of Portage and Main.

We were exploring. I'd already explored enough of Canada by myself. Once I took the train from Toronto to Vancouver, before getting up to Tofino to stand in the Pacific with raised arms. As a dad, things are now different.

My girl and I flew from Hamilton to Edmonton, explored some of the Rockies, then drove east across the Prairies, eventually to Winnipeg and that famous intersection: Portage and Main, Canada's crossroads, the centre (roughly) of our massive nation that stretches more than 9000 kilometres, sea to shining sea.

My daughter had just turned 18. The trip was her birthday gift. And to thank Canada. Not everyone in the world, to state the obvious, is as fortunate.

Brian, a family friend in Uganda, recently wrote me. "I'm kindly requesting to get me to Canada. Please, sir, I'm begging. Please help." It was that sort of note.

Brian, a good young man, a remarkable soccer player, just wants a leg up in life. A university educa-

tion. An escape from limits he's been born into. He sent a photo of his Ugandan passport. "Mr. Thom. Please."

This is the majority world. If our world of 8 billion people were a village of 100, how many would have a university education? Seven. Thirty would have access to the internet. Nine would live without safe water. Twenty would live in fear of kidnapping or rape or death by war or armed attack or landmines. One would be starving. This is our world. Uneven. Unfair. Often unbelievable.

To hold a Canadian passport, then? To sing "Oh Canada," with your own unique voice? Good God, we're in a good place. And despite Canada's vastness — the world's second largest nation by land mass — we're a select few. You'd need about two global villages, about 200 people, to find just one Canadian.

It's easy to think otherwise, that the wheels are now somehow falling off.

Our shortcomings and differences get easy attention. And, sure, it's been some time. That truckers protest in Ottawa? Now when some pickup truck drives past with Canada's flag flying on a hockey stick, we know that's either for love of country, or a statement that Ottawa is surely harbouring Trotsky and the Bolsheviks.

A young father recently explained

to me why he and his family might leave for (good grief) the States. It's Canada's lack of freedoms, you see? P-u-h-lease. Go Go travel. Get past your driveway. Start with visiting Brian.

Not that our government gets a free pass. I was so uninspired by the options in the last federal election, I voted Greens. In protest. Where are the Lauriers? The Diefenbakers? Where is the trust?

In either case, as a boy I did sometimes wonder if some unmarked government van might swing by the playground and pick me up. I'd be deported.

Too much to explain here, but the day before my third birthday, my father and I met for the first time. As the story goes, with tempting sweets, he lured me from underneath a couch in my temporary home, in Germany, my birthplace. Soon after, we flew to Canada. Dad Froese, a German-born Canadian citizen, had acquired my legal custody, but, apparently, without proper landing paperwork for me. As a boy here, I was seemingly unknown, or illegal, or both.

Maybe it's why I see Canada as a rather motherly place.

Robertson Davies put it well, writing, "I believe that Canada has a soul, and we should get to know it better." It does. And we should.

Next up for the big Canada trip is my son, 18 next summer. The year after, I'll take Child No. 3, the Ugandan-born girl. With any luck, long after I'm gone, these three kids will carry something promising into their own relationship with this nation.

If they do — and I have confidence in them — they can say more.

THOMAS FROESE WRITES ABOUT NEWS, TRAVEL AND LIFE. FIND HIM AT WWW.THOMASFROESE.COM.

Standing on guard for every gain made



DEIRDRE PIKE
OPINION

I almost chickened out. When I had the chance to walk in Toronto's Pride Parade last Sunday, I didn't jump at it.

While I've danced my way up Yonge Street during a multitude of Dyke Marches, I have always taken the role of spectator during Sunday's grand display. Why mess with tradition?

And in this year of years, as most quasi-post-pandemic Pride parades around in-person, I wasn't so sure it was the best one in which to venture out of Hamilton, on a new and less frequent GoBus schedule.

Aside from those everyday excuses and apprehensions, I had common COVID-19 concerns as I imagined milling among throngs of throngs and unmasked faces.

Then Roe vs. Wade opened up the reality that rights won are not rights kept.

Equal rights marriage advocates like Jim Obergefell, the plaintiff in the decision to legalize same-sex marriage in 2015 in the U.S., remarked, "When we lose one right that we have relied on and enjoyed, other rights are at risk."

Comments made by Justice Clarence Thomas verified that risk, suggesting the court should review

precedent-setting decisions like same-sex marriage as well as the 2003 decision striking down laws criminalizing sodomy.

Then Saturday morning we awoke to the news of a gunman on a killing rampage in a gay bar in Oslo, Norway. Two people died and 20 were injured.

On the advice of local police, the official Pride parade scheduled for the next day was cancelled. However, a spontaneous march manifested with courageous chants of, "We're here, we're queer, we won't disappear."

I was reignited for the fight. I asked Siri to start up the music on my Pride playlist. I was going to conjure up my activist roots. The next morning, I headed out to the Metropolitan Community "Church on Church" service, moved off Church at the last minute, on account of rain that never came. I was happy for the switch because I'd never taken the time to travel to the brick building on Simpson Avenue where history has happened.

The energy in the service was just like I remembered, but from a balcony view and no worries about sunscreen or umbrellas. Masks were handed out at the door.

The music by the MCC Choir was fabulous, singing both their own pieces and backing up performers I've missed like Julie Michaels.

In the spaces for silence, I reflected on Canada Day and whether we

could feel a little more pride this year in terms of 2SLGBTQ+ plus inclusion.

While it seems like we are light years ahead of our southern neighbours, we must stand on guard for each and every gain we have made, and push for those yet to come, like legislation needed to protect the rights of trans and intersex people.

The federal budget, unveiled by Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland in April, included a historic investment to the tune of \$100 million to 2SLGBTQ+ plus people.

The federal LGBTQ2 Action Plan sets out to "remove systemic barriers on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, together with intersecting identity factors such as race, age and economic status."

That sounds like good news. Now we need to see that rolled out and begin to add up the indicators of change.

After the church service ended at the MCC, I walked around the interior of the beautiful heritage building and spotted people taking pictures. It seemed to be just a traditional rainbow flag, but there was a plaque below.

As I made my way to stop, I began to make out the words commemorating Jan. 14, 2001, when the first legal same-sex marriage took place in that very spot, the presider and participants, wearing bulletproof vests.

I had no trouble putting aside my reluctance to participate and picked up the pace to make my way to the streets to parade our collective pride and protest.

DEIRDRE PIKE IS A QUEER, LESBIAN ACTIVIST, AND A FREELANCE COLUMNIST FOR THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR.

