

LETTERS

### Be heard on the Greenbelt

We have been reading many letters to The Spec expressing outrage at Ford's Greenbelt grab, Bill 23, the gutting of conservation authorities and the indiscriminate use of ministerial zoning orders (MZOs) to override local decision-making. As volunteers of the Burlington Community Climate Action Hub, a resident-driven, non-partisan community movement focused on local climate action, we stand against these things too.

Please join us in participating in a quick 10 minute confidential survey being conducted by SPR Associates Inc. as a not-for-profit public interest project to provide empirical data to support opponents of Bill 23. The survey is located at: [bit.ly/4ijZNLt](https://bit.ly/4ijZNLt).

In addition to the Burlington Community Climate Action Hub, this survey is supported by NGOs (non-governmental organizations) like the YWCA, the Ontario Coalition of Agencies Serving Immigrants, small business, unions and other neighbourhood associations.

This is a chance to make your voice heard and make a difference. The deadline is Tuesday, so don't wait! Stand up to protect our Greenbelt from development before it's gone forever.

Jane Jenner, on behalf of the Burlington Community Climate Action Hub

### Winter treat from the RBG

In these bleak days, beat the February Blues with an evening visit to Winter Tide at the Royal Botanical Gardens. My partner and I discovered this wonderful event last year and attended the first event this year of jazz artists Junestone. This group is one of a variety appearing throughout February and March.

The main building of the Rock Gardens has been transformed into a lounge setting of large comfy couches, easy chairs, wing chairs and large basket chairs arranged in settings to accommodate larger or smaller groups. The atmosphere is warm and inviting. The gardens have been transformed into a twinkling fairyland of thousands of lights and Muskoka chairs around fire pits for outdoor comfort. Truly a magical experience and well worth a visit.

Evelyn Paulsen, Burlington

### Automation's high toll

While many politicians seem to be "hanging their hats" on the loss of manufacturing and other jobs being lost in North America due to outsourcing overseas, there are many reports by economists that blame the loss of jobs on automation.

Recently, I had two experiences with automation that underscore the latter.

When walking into a Walmart store on Hamilton Mountain I found only one designated cashier station — there were 14 self-serve stations manned by one "floater" cashier. Similarly, I was in Home Depot stores and found all the regular cashier stations had been replaced by self-serve stations with two "floater" cashiers to assist.

I recall a CBC Radio interview of several years ago concerning the advances made in certain areas of medicine, and the interviewee stating that just because we are able to do certain things does not mean it is the right thing to do.

Seems that we should be listening more to the economists.

David Eyles, Hamilton

### The candidates and climate

Regarding "Byelection is an opportunity" (Feb. 23): This letter clearly reminds voters that Hamilton has vowed to treat "climate change" as an existential crisis. Accordingly, this is an opportune time to ask candidates what their emergency plans are.

Dan Brown, Hamilton

### That water is expensive

The city says it has provided the waterless residents of 1083 Main St. E. with 512 jugs of water at a cost of \$12,000. As a taxpayer I don't mind helping out the less fortunate, but \$23 for a jug of water?

Phil Beard, Dundas

### When masking is essential

My brother desperately needed a new kidney. My husband unselfishly gave him one.

My brother will protect this gift of life with every breath he takes. We know this. You should know this. Yes, he wears a mask. Yes, he probably always will.

Unless you have walked a mile in his shoes, you have no right to judge anyone who chooses to or who has no choice but to wear one.

Marlene Girvan, Ancaster

### What OHIP doesn't cover

I suggest an article featuring a list of the most common or most significant services which OHIP does not cover, and for which payment, or additional payment, is required, with the cost or cost range listed.

My GP has a notice in his waiting room displaying fees which OHIP does not cover.

A search for a similar list on OHIP was the opposite of informative. I know already that there are extra fees for a cataract operation and been told that this is also the case for varicose vein treatment. What else?

Roy Cheers, Dundas



RON BULL THE CANADIAN PRESS FILE PHOTO

William Hutt gracefully acknowledges a standing ovation at the Winter Garden Theatre in Toronto in 2016. A recent feature on Hutt by Gary Smith reminded Carol Greene of the importance of nurturing the creative streak we all have but sometimes ignore.

## William Hutt's lesson about our need to be creative

CAROL GREENE

I'm not a big theatre buff. I only go to a couple productions a year. I also couldn't care less about celebrity culture. But I always read Gary Smith's profiles of the stars of the stage — past and present.

They've included Ginger Rogers, Judi Dench, Chita Rivera, Christopher Plummer, James Earl Jones and many more. Over the past three years, these profiles have connected me to the productions, performances and people that have spent their lives creating theatre magic, all during a time when so many theatres and other cultural venues were closed because of COVID-19.

Smith's fond memories of these actors, all of whom he has met and interviewed, are delightful reads. I especially enjoyed a recent profile of the great Shakespearean actor William Hutt (Feb. 6).

I was lucky enough to see Hutt in a production of Beckett's "Waiting for Godot" in 2004, just three years before he died at the age of 87. I was also lucky enough to be sitting a stone's throw away from him at an Italian restaurant near the theatre on Toronto's harbourfront. Wayne, my partner, asked if I was going to say hello. "No," I panicked. First, he's probably preparing for what would be a demanding two-hour performance in a play that is essentially about nothing — or is it?

That's always the question about this play, isn't it. Second, I just didn't know enough about Hutt and his career to even feign an intelligent conversation. So, I left the man in peace and finished my pizza.

His performance as an older Vladimir one of his last, was fantastic. He and Estragon, the two tramps, make idle and absurdist chit chat as they wait for Godot, someone they don't know, have never met, but who they believe will offer them salvation. Many readers of the play believe Godot represents God. Unfortunately for Vladimir and Estragon, Godot never appears despite their long, hopeful wait.

In Hutt's profile in The Spec, Smith talks to him about religion. Hutt says he's not a churchgoer, but is spiritual. "The one thing I do know, I'm absolutely convinced that element in man that is closest to God is the desire to create. Knowing that you may be able to understand God and be in his service is perfect surrender. It's about coming to that moment when you know what surrender truly means."

I'm not a churchgoer either, and I struggle with the concept of God. But Hutt's take on it makes sense to me. I spend a considerable amount of my time creating — writing stories and making music. These are my moments of perfect surrender. Not always so perfect, but surren-

der nonetheless.

My spouse Wayne is also a creative, and is most happy when writing and recording his original music. Most of our friends are creators, too, whether in the kitchen, workshop, art, music or writing studios. They are makers of things — quilts, prosciutto, paintings, stories, back decks, CDs and more. It is their desire to create that makes them who they are, and it is their experience creating that gives them so much empathy for and interest in the creations of others.

In the words of writer Kurt Vonnegut, "The arts are not a way to make a living. They are a very human way of making life more bearable. Practising an art, no matter how well or badly, is a way to make your soul grow, for heaven's sake. Sing in the shower. Dance to the radio. Tell stories. Write a poem to a friend. Even a lousy poem. Do it as well as you possibly can. You will get an enormous reward. You will have created something."

Smith's piece on Hutt reminded me of how important this desire to create — this "perfect surrender" — is to our humanity. How do we make our lives more bearable through it.

Oh, and about Smith's celebrity profiles in this newspaper: As usual, I was glad I read another one. Always a good investment of time.

CAROL GREENE LIVES IN HAMILTON.

## What matters most about Elvis's legacy



THOMAS FROESE  
OPINION

The interesting thing about Elvis is that he crossed borders. With the Oscars approaching — "Baz Luhrmann's Elvis" has eight nominations — it's something to think about.

Not those sorts of borders. And not that I was really around. I was 12 when Elvis died. My mother-in-law, though, was there when Elvis and his pelvis shook the world. She told me when I took her, in her wheelchair, to see the movie.

"Mang, you have to come and see this," her cousin yelled one day in 1956 from one room to another, Elvis there on her uncle's TV screen.

"People found him different, even strange at first," she told me. "I remember talking about it with my mother, driving home from my uncles."

Before my mother-in-law, I'd taken my three teens, in two visits, to the theatre. Austin Butler's remarkable rendition of Elvis was worth it. Later I took my bride. So I saw his film four times. We all have our fascinations.

As a teen I read about what went wrong with Elvis, even as I'd stand on a stool to reach atop a kitchen

cabinet to play, say, "Unchained Melody" on my new double-cassette-LP stereo from Canadian Tire. Or, on my Walkman, "You'll Never Walk Alone," during late-night walks. The King of Rock and Roll, I discovered, had another side.

Consider "Don't Cry Daddy" and its lyrics: "Daddy, please don't cry. Daddy, you've still got me and little Tommy. Together we'll find a brand new Mommy. Daddy, Daddy, please laugh again," and so on.

Around when Elvis recorded this song, my mother had left my father and us two kids for eternity. I imagined I was little Tommy and Elvis had somehow reached through the fabric of the universe just for my family. I felt, like others, connected.

Now my own kids. My 17-year-old Ugandan-born girl offers this: "The movie wasn't cringy."

That's high praise from a teen. "It was complex. Showed real life. Good soundtrack." Thanks Hannah.

And while Luhrmann typically uses plenty of creative licence in his films, exploring Elvis through Black music and culture is something he gets spot on. In addition to crossing generations and musical genres, Elvis, essentially a Black singer in a white body, crossed racial barriers.

Consider (this isn't in the movie) his appearance at Memphis' Goodwill Revue for a 1957 fundraiser for Black kids, with Black stars like BB

King. That took, as King later wrote, "guts." Segregation laws ruled the South. But the Pittsburgh Courier reported this, "A thousand Black, brown and beige teenage girls in the audience blended their alto and soprano voices in one wild crescendo of sound that rent the rafters."

This, naturally, threatened the tongue-waggers of the day.

And while the Luhrmann film focuses on Elvis' long-time handler, Colonel Tom Parker, it also asks, poignantly, if with Parker's toxic enabling or not, it's the unbridled adulation, the crowds, that caged or even killed the addicted Elvis as much as anything else. Are we the monsters? The drug?

To know and be known. This is what we need. You. Me. Elvis. Anyone. We don't need to be known by many people, but, rather, just a few who know us well, even if we, too, despise ourselves, loves us.

This is our deepest human need. The poets and social scientists tell us. Life itself affirms it. Finding fame ("50,000,000 Elvis Fans Can't Be Wrong" and that) is one way to live. But it's a shaky way.

When she was just 9, little Lisa Marie hugged her dead father on the floor of Graceland. "My Daddy is dead," she said. Now Lisa Marie is gone, also early, after her own life of collected sorrows. This is the long shadow that fame can cast.

In our time, more than ever with handy technology, people are looking for attention, clamouring for the stage. But it can all be deceptive. Of everything that Elvis left behind, this note is what's worth the most.

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