

LETTERS

Bullying defenders

The imprisonment of a Palestinian man who, in protest of Israel's "administrative detention" policy, starved himself to death is deserving of attention from all who support human rights. A recent letter writer suggested as the man was "suspected of terrorism" — we should accept that he can be incarcerated without trial, without even charges and in the absence of any evidence.

This man's protest was on behalf of hundreds of Palestinians, including minors, who are being held under the same "administrative detention" policy. The abhorrent violation of human rights has been called out by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, among others.

I salute Sarah Jama for continuing to stand up for human rights; too bad her party lacks the same courage and integrity. At its very core, the NDP platform aligns with activism and the fight for social justice, at least it used to.

It's a dark day when people in Canada try to bully human rights defenders into silence.

Rachel Threlkeld, Hamilton

City spending questionable

The city is getting a consultant for \$100,000 to see what is wrong with the farmers market. My wife went there one time to check it out. We were there maybe 15 minutes. It was sad. We have been to many farmers markets all over the place and this was the saddest. You could have paid me \$500 and I would have told the city what was wrong with it.

Next, I read that workers were putting up steel bollards at city hall to prevent any vehicles from entering the forecourt. The cost was \$597,777. So I looked up exactly what a bollard is. I see you can buy them from Uline at \$116 each. In Niagara Falls, they put up barriers after the Toronto van incident that were pretty secure and were made out of plastic filled with water. Hard to get anything through them. But \$600,000? Meanwhile, our taxes keep going up and up.

Joe Quaresma, Hamilton

CBC is Canada's glue

A recent letter alleging CBC is just a mouthpiece for the Liberal government is mistaken. It was established in 1936 by an Act of Parliament, and has served Canadians under both Liberal and Conservative governments. I remember the days of Trudeau Sr. and Joe Clark when the CBC criticized and ridiculed both equally.

CBC is one of the few things that holds Canada together. Where else would you get a coast-to-coast phone-in show like "Cross Country Check-up" with Ian Hanomansing?

Dorothy Turcotte, Grimsby

AI moving too fast

I agree with the experts that the AI evolution is moving way too fast while many are downplaying the possible dangers. We cherry-picked listening to experts during the pandemic and here we are again playing with a technology potentially more dangerous without safeguards. When one views the present world we see power, greed and polarization becoming the business model where war and chaos are becoming the new norm. Many refuse to even have a reasonable debate or listen to someone else's input, fearing a loss of face or acknowledging an intervention that would benefit the collective not just the few.

Compassion, integrity, altruism and truth seem to be shrinking values for many especially people in power so why create something potentially smarter than humans. Humanity hasn't earned the right to this when we see our dark nature at present.

Robert Panchyson, Burlington

Monarchy is doomed

The monarchy in Canada is doomed. Once the Boomer generation is gone, there won't be anyone who wants it left.

Marilee Morrison, Norfolk County

Royal parenting skills

Prince Harry travels 5,400 miles to attend his father's coronation as a show of support for his dad, despite the family rift. While there, King Charles couldn't spare five minutes to talk to his son. Poor parenting skills and poor judgment as I see it. So why should I trust this guy to be king?

John Valeri, Watford

Mass shootings no longer news

I woke up to the news coming from south of the border. A mass shooting outside Dallas where eight were killed and seven wounded before the shooter was himself shot. It was also pointed out that this was the 199th mass shooting in the U.S. in the 123 days since the beginning of the year.

The point: mass shootings in the U.S. are not news. A day without a mass shooting — that would be news.

Richard Ronchka, Carlisle

Geranium thieves

It must be spring — three newly-planted geraniums just "disappeared" from the planter boxes on the rail of my front porch. Can I really afford to spend another \$15 on something I can't eat?

Jean Kovacs, Hamilton



Margaret and Gerry Chamberlain on their wedding day in 1960. Reflecting on Mother's Day and his mother-in-law, columnist Thomas Froese writes, "Mum Chamberlain is just one example of the reach that one life can have, especially in our time."

COURTESY OF THE CHAMBERLAIN FAMILY

Honouring the reach and heart of one mother



THOMAS FROESE
OPINION

She's the mother of my bride, Mum, or Mum Chamberlain, as I like to call her. I'm at her bedside. The children and my wife, Jean, are on live video from across the ocean, from East Africa. "We love you, Grams!"

Jean shares greetings from the team of Save the Mothers, the Ugandan-Canadian charity she helped birth and direct for years. Mum smiles. She knows the story. The history. The value of this trip, even for these grandkids. It's not every day they get back to where they grew up. Two are Hamilton-born, but all three call Uganda their "Motherland." Probably always will.

Mum Chamberlain knows. She knows her loved ones. Knows how to support them. Knows vulnerable mothers who often face death during childbirth. Knows how to support them also, behind the scenes.

Uganda? Mum and her husband Gerry went twice. Saw the places. The faces. And Yemen? Where Jean and I started our early years? It's not the world's biggest tourist destination. But they saw us there, too.

"I love you all!" From her bed, Mum's voice flies 12,000 kilometres away.

This is Margaret Chamberlain: career nurse, traveller, wife, mother

of four, grandmother of 11, great-grandmother of four and holder of, like many of the world's two billion mothers, a generous spirit. I recently asked her about it all: motherhood and family. Because, let's be honest, expectations of family life can often be unrealistically high. Or cynically low.

That day she shared with love and grace about each of her children. Their stories. Their families. This, also here from her space in this Hamilton care home where she lives with 200 others. She's the only one with pink hair. That's Mum.

We met 23 years ago. Soon after, the job at hand was to celebrate her and Gerry's 40th. I recall the hunt for bride and groom mannequins, complete with gown and tux, representing the lovely couple. It was late summer of 2000. I'd just started dating her daughter.

And during my first time at her home, what did Mum Chamberlain say? "Come back anytime!" So I did, somehow invited into a family beyond my reach. But don't we all stand on somebody's shoulders?

Consider Jean, sometime after receiving the Order of Canada for her work with vulnerable mothers, crediting her parents.

"They instilled in me that heart for people who don't have," Jean told one documentarian. "That you're been blessed, so what can you do for others? Not from guilt, but really from joy in your heart. That's one of the greatest gifts they've given me."

Now Sunday, Mother's Day, a day celebrated in more than 100 na-

tions. Sunday, also, Jean and the children return. The larger family will then see Mum Chamberlain for, humanly speaking, her last Mother's Day. It's cancer.

This is it. Mother's Day can be bittersweet. Still we celebrate. Because Mum Chamberlain is just one example of the reach that one life can have, especially in our time.

Consider that in 1860 the average grandchild spent just four years with their grandmother and one year with their grandfather. A century later, in 1960, the year Margaret and Gerry married, the average Canadian lived into their 60s, but many still never saw their grandchildren, never mind great-grandchildren.

Now the average Canadian woman lives to Mum's age, 84. And one in five of the world's 8 billion people are grandparents. That's significant cross-generational support and influence. It helps close generational gaps. In wisdom. In resources.

Gerry, by the way, doesn't remember the family story. It's dementia. This too is family life. But on Sunday, like he is at times, he'll be at his wife's bedside. And while he can't remember, what's one thing that Gerry can do? With surprising clarity? Pray.

So, somehow, he'll likely pray for his longtime bride. And Mum Chamberlain will hear from the children, young and old, about one thing or another. She'll be happy to hear it all.

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

Saving the nature that nurtures us

NINA SCHURMAN-DRENTH

On Oct. 25, the Ontario government proposed Bill 23, an act called More Homes Built Faster, that seeks to build 15 million homes within the next decade. On Nov. 4, the province voted to move forward with future developments in locations all over southern Ontario that are currently farmland, conservation areas and wetlands.

Around Hamilton, they are committing to expanding the urban boundary so as to develop 2,200 hectares of the countryside. This includes three parcels of land that are now set to be removed from the Greenbelt.

All this overrides a Hamilton council vote from last year, which committed to maintaining the city's urban boundary and density within the boundary instead. Hamilton's people and our council made a clear and decisive choice together to say no to sprawl.

On one level, it is forward-thinking of Ford's government to be interested in ensuring homes for everyone, especially here in the GTHA where there is a housing affordability crisis and many particularly the most vulnerable, are experiencing the stress of that.

That said, in light of the growing climate crisis, the real question is

one asked often by Indigenous peoples who have stewarded this land since time immemorial: how do we ensure we still have homes seven generations from now?

More houses won't be all we need to ensure long-term homes for Ontario.

Home is more than a roof over your head; it's a place where you nurture that which nurtures you. In my spiritual tradition, there is a poem about God giving the first humans their home in a garden. God tells them "I give every green plant for food" (Genesis 1:30); the land nurtures the humans. Then the humans are taught "to work and take care of the garden," (Genesis 2:15); they nurtured the land in return.

This is what all of us, as treaty people, must consider here in the Dish With One Spoon treaty territory. The dish represents the land between the Great Lakes, and the treaty reminds us of the reality that all of us here share that one dish. Therefore, we must ensure we consume only our fair portion from the land, and leave enough food, land and resources for others.

In doing so, we nurture the sacred land around us that nurtures us through the food it produces, the peace its wild spaces offer us, and the clean air and water it provides. Enfolded into the Dish With One

Spoon and the Genesis poem is the radical claim that if we live wisely, there will be enough for everyone, even seven generations from now.

Many wise leaders in urban planning have proposed that there is enough within Hamilton's urban boundary to house our growing population. We need our city council to rezone land for 15-30 stories in existing places such as Limeridge Mall, the area surrounding Confederation GO, and other underutilized places like vacant schools, one-storey commercial plazas and parking lots.

My spiritual tradition has another story that casts a vision for a city where the ecosystem nurtures us and we nurture it in return. At the centre of this future city, there is a community orchard, a "tree of life with its 12 kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month" (Rev. 22:2). Flowing through the city is its watershed, which they call a "river of the water of life, bright as crystal" (Rev. 22:17).

Urban planners call this kind of vision "Smart Cities," urban places that use both the latest technology and the wisdom of ecology to develop a home for human and non-human creatures.

Hamilton is ripe with opportunity for new planning projects that will meet our housing needs, while also continuing to nurture the Greenbelt and countryside that nurtures us. This will be the home-making work for which the seventh generation after us will give thanks.

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