

LETTERS

Ignoring dreadful mistakes

"Don't Look Up" is a movie with a relatable trope — an expert tells a person in power they're about to make a dreadful mistake and is ignored.

The agenda for the Hamilton Conservation Authority's June board meeting includes a letter from HCA to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing concerning A Place to Grow. In it is a concern that the government is undermining the overall objective of the provincial land use planning framework that seeks to consider and balance the full range of economic, social and environmental considerations and priorities.

Also, Conservation Ontario's GM says the new authority for ministerial zoning orders may have the unintended consequences of undermining the protection of sources of drinking water and creating conflict with the Clean Water Act.

In its haste to build a relationship with developers, the Ford government is ignoring key stakeholders, Kayleigh Swanson, in centering Equity and Justice in Participatory Climate Action Planning, emphasizes that advancing equity and justice in climate action planning requires a reflexive, participatory practice that practice that centres around vulnerable residents.

City planning could be a powerful tool to fight climate change. Instead we have a situation where many professionals are saying, "I wouldn't do that if I were you," to no avail.

Richard MacKinnon, Hamilton

Finally, a feasible approach

Regarding designated for encampment approvals: Finally, a feasible approach that has always been at hand. At least homeless people will have some place to sleep than on the open ground lost somewhere. But it is a temporary fix and it is still the lazy way out. Emergency shelters are overcrowded and unsafe and it is why some homeless people turn to encampments.

What is needed is investment in emergency shelters, to start, one that that offers shower and laundry services, at least, and where clients have privacy and can bring their pets, too, for example. Set rules with boundaries and responsibilities, a system like this can work. But for now, with the tiny homes project on hold, the proposal for designated encampment sites is a step forward toward helping the homeless.

Tina Maini, Hamilton

Inaction on Aberdeen

Several years ago there was talk that the city would be reorganizing Aberdeen, adding bike lanes, etc. At the time, I assumed the city would take that opportunity to do some much-needed repaving. Since then, nothing, except the repaving of a short section near James, which didn't need it.

The result? The CA ranks Aberdeen as the eighth worst stretch of road in the province. What's going on?

Richard Harris, Hamilton

Take the long way around

I'm in my 70s and have lived in this great city of Hamilton most of my life, mostly in the core. I have lived in what I consider my favourite area Ward 2 or Cortright.

I'm delighted to see a conversion back to two-way streets again — should have been done a long time ago. I don't know how many extra miles I've driven just to get from point A to point B and how much extra gas I've had to use in doing so.

For all you people complaining about slowing you down, here is a suggestion: take Centennial Parkway down to Nikola Tesla Boulevard (Burlington street), take it as far as you can. You might be saying that it's the long way around, but hey, all you want to do is go fast right?

John Wood, Hamilton

Too many Santa parades

I appreciate that city council is showing some prudence when doling out taxpayer money to selective causes like parades. But can we please stop with the resource splitting and duplication and have one parade? We don't need every borough in Hamilton to have a Santa parade.

Blanche Baldwin, Hamilton

Think beyond present day

Victor Doyle wrote an informative, studied, impassioned article about the Greenbelt and why it must be preserved. Why is it constantly being attacked by a provincial government that insists it needs to be broken into to serve the expansion of housing when we already have sufficient places to expand?

Please support this incredible gift that has been given to us. Those who come after us will be proud we thought beyond our present day.

Jane Evans, Hamilton

Don't go down Ford's road

I am almost 93. I have lived without health care so know which is better. Privatization is not the way to go. If we are all treated equally and have good health care, those who are better off have nothing to fear.

If we go in Premier Doug Ford's direction, most of us need to worry and our worry will be justified. It will not be equal and the poorest among us will as usual lose the most.

Lorna Johnson, Hamilton



TORSTAR FILE PHOTO

This is not Sadie, but it is a St. Bernard, like the beloved pet commemorated here by Dave Davis.

Only a dog? Remembering a beloved family member

DAVE DAVIS

I found my wife in the middle of a supermarket aisle, I had had news. An hour earlier, our veterinarian had called me in the office to say, "The cancer spread all through Sadie, Dave. There's nothing we could do. I'm so sorry."

My wife was midway through our weekly shopping in tears as we hugged, I had this odd, parallel thought: Sadie was only a dog. Why am I crying?

In minutes, we left the grocery store. For all I know, the cart is still there, half filled. So is Sadie, in our hearts, at least. And on our walks we have a beautiful, framed picture of our daughter, a five-year-old blonde imp at the time, her arm draped over her best friend, a 90-pound St. Bernard. Come have a look any time.

Sadie. To tell you about her, I have to tell you about Vince, my patient (a made-up name, definitely not a made-up person). An ageless 40 I'd guess, a personality bigger than life or my little waiting room. Colourful language, grand plans. A Damon Runyon character, like Hot Horse Herbie, Harry the Horse or Nicely-Nicely Jones. Vince was a composite of all of those, plus one more thing he had a dog to sell.

On an earlier day, at the end of a visit, he asked, "Wanna see something?" He took me to his car, a jizzly all-white Cadillac. In the back

were four playful St. Bernard puppies, tiny fur-balls of instant Prozac. "You pick, doc," he said. I fell in love with the runt of the litter, but she was too young to take home. "I'll call you when she's had her shots and stuff!" he yelled as he backed his Caddy out of the office parking lot.

He was true to his word, sort of. Almost exactly four weeks later we got a call from Vince's lawyer. Vince, it seems, had landed in a jam, the kind with bars and fingerprinting. Our little runt was fine though, now several weeks old and ready for her new family. "Drop by the house after work," the lawyer said, and a strange house call ensued. I got a now-much-bigger puppy and her papers, paid the vaccination and other costs, and watched over the next several hours and days as the three of us became a family of four — the fourth one being Sadie.

Her pedigree papers called her Country Squire Belle Star, but she was just Sadie to us. (Unfortunately, our neighbour's mother was also Sadie. Yelling out the front door for our dog often brought a surprised response from the house across the street.) Our Sadie was never one of those over-groomed, snobby breeds like Buddy Holly, the recent winner of the Westminster Dog Show, a Petit Basset Griffon Vendéen — whatever the heck that is. Not our girl: she was humble, hard-working, playful, kind. Occasionally

unkempt and muddy. Always loved. That first night, I watched as she planted her head firmly on my wife's lap before my evening office and was still there three hours later.

I watched as Sadie dove for the bottom of the stairs when our daughter took a tumble on the second step, landing safely on a furry canine cushion.

I watched as Sadie learned to dance, her paws on my shoulders, never complaining, like others in the family, about my lack of rhythm.

I watched our family of four become five as our son arrived (a millionaire's family, my neighbour said — oh yeah?)

I watched as they'd all wait for me at the corner of our property when I'd come home from work. I watched as our daughter took in Saturday morning cartoons, uncomplaining Sadie as her back rest or her trusted steed.

I watched as a dog — a dog! — worked her way happily, sneakily into our hearts, teaching us a huge lesson about love, and family. And teaching us this: love can be ripped from you in a split second.

Even in a grocery store.

Only a dog? No way.

DAVE DAVIS IS A RETIRED FAMILY DOC AND WRITER. HIS LATEST WORK, "TWO PAGE TALES," CO-WRITTEN WITH THE WRITERS IN PARADISE, IS AN ANTHOLOGY OF SHORT STORIES. HIS BOOKS ARE AVAILABLE ON AMAZON. VISIT DRDAVEDAVIS.COM.

Exploring mysteries on the other side

thespectator

young doctor, say to the first dead person she saw? He was so newly-dead, he was still, in her words, "working out how to be dead." She said, "Thank you." It's a good ice-breaker, I suppose. I like it, that spirit. "Thank you."

But, back to the living, one wonders why it's so hard to talk about dying. One-out-of-one dies. It's the ultimate statistic.

Mum Chamberlain died 23 years to the day after we'd met. That day, at her house, I'd picked up her daughter for our first date. After friends never showed to watch a baseball game, Jean and I opted instead for dinner and fireworks. It was Victoria Day.

So when it comes to this business of living, and dying, it's fireworks, funny-enough, that come to my mind. Especially for lives that have been lived more by faith than by sight.

Not everyone lives this way, of course. Some people choose more hellish ways. My own understanding is that if we choose life on our own terms, with a measure of heaven, (or hell), then on the other side we'll experience the same, just exponentially more. In this, we reap what we sow.

More to the point, though, the need — and it will only get larger — is to help the frail die with dignity. With a soft landing. That's not suggesting a shot of secobarbital for an early MAID exit. That's a train that's already flying horribly off the tracks.

Rather, it's celebrating quality palliative care. Like at Margaret's Place. We need more of these humane, well-thought-out supports. Lots more.

FIND THOMAS FROESE AT THOMASFROESE.COM.



THOMAS FROESE
OPINION

The life of my mother-in-law, Mum Chamberlain, is now marked in a burial plot near the shade of old trees. Recently it's been celebrated in various ways. It reminds me of fireworks. Not that "celebration" is a perfect word for these matters. Death can still drag in its bag of fears.

My own fears of death came when I was a boy standing at my Op's casket, which was closed, waist down. Unable to see my Op's legs, I concluded they were cut off to fit him in. Later, I often dreamt of evil men coming to hack off my own legs. It was an unfounded fear, but fear nonetheless.

Then there's the mystery of the other side. The enigmas in the best Agatha Christie can't compare. Even the ancient scriptures, helpful as they are, concede that no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what's in store from our Creator for that long tomorrow.

In either case, we need to talk about death. And dying. Not all cultures do this well. In the west we easily talk about anything but. Death is often trivialized or sensationalized. In her book, "With the

End in Mind: Dying, Death, and Wisdom in an Age of Denial," Kathryn Mannix makes that point. A physician for decades in end-of-life care, she brings some welcome understanding.

She notes our sense of dying has changed especially with modern medical advances that, ironically, extend life. Instead of dying peacefully at home, as was common, now we might go in some screaming ambulance, or a cold ER, or ICU, or operating room, no loved one near to hold a hand or listen to a last soft breath.

What's the biggest fear for most people, all the more since the pandemic? Dying alone.

Mum Chamberlain, Margaret, died in an exceptional public hospice in Dundas named, fittingly, "Margaret's Place." Two daughters at her bedside held her hands. Stroked her hair. Sang hymns. Eventually one, Jean, my bride, woke me. Along with our eldest daughter, also there, I'd fallen asleep. It was just past 3:30 a.m. "Mum's dead."

I wonder if she experienced something like flying, maybe a little nervous before finally taking off. Then the ascent, and levelling-off of the flight. Then relief, really, that she's actually left the show, the entire circus of it, Earth, forever. Just pure joy now. Good God.

By the way, what did Mannix, as a