

LETTERS

AI should get the right to vote

I asked my Microsoft Edge software (which uses AI technology), the following question: "Write me a 300-word essay as to the benefits given to ordinary people by this Ontario Conservative government?"

It searched the entire web then replied; "I'm sorry but I couldn't find any information about the benefits given to ordinary people by the Ontario Conservative government. Could you provide me with more details or context so that I can help you better."

Wow! I think AI should also get the right to vote!
Kurt Arndt, Hamilton

Pierre's not 'Trumpian'

I am moved to write this letter after reading a couple of letters calling Pierre Poilievre Trumpian. After all Trump's behaviour, before, during, and after his term in office has been distasteful at best and illegal at worst so I assume to label someone Trumpian is meant to insult the person.

Pierre was raised by teachers not in extreme wealth. He has been in Parliament for close to 20 years and yet there has been no scandal. No inappropriate treatment of women. No shady business deals. No racist or violent behaviour. I am sure if the present ruling government could find any scandal in or out of Pierre's public life they would be very happy to share it with us. Isn't the role of the official opposition is to criticize the government with the purpose of holding them accountable. He has been given a lot to work with lately.

Even with all its warts I am happy to live in Canada with Canadian politics and politicians. I would not call any of our politicians Trumpian, but if I was going to slap a label on one of them it would not be Pierre Poilievre.
Heather Todd, Hamilton

Trudeau needs to go

If Justin Trudeau doesn't retire before the next election, we are going to get stuck with Conservatives and Poilievre. Trudeau must put his ego aside to save Canada.

Mel Colbeck, Hamilton

The climate ball is in our court

In her article "Wildfires are a warning that must be heeded" (June 14) Jane Jenner joins voices like that of Rachel Carson, warning us of a "Silent Spring"; António Guterres, secretary of the United Nations, telling us to "act now"; Greta Thunberg, "Our house is on fire." All calling for decisive action. With everything at risk Jenner asks our prime minister, "Have you the courage for this? What can be numbing our prime minister's feelings? If not with those referred to above, is there someone who wants him to put on a happy face while they profit from his compliance?"

The fossil fuel industry is reaping huge profits. Canadian banks loan billions of dollars to the fossil fuel industries. The Canada Pension Plan invests in oil gas and coal. Churches invest their savings in fossil fuel stock. Indigenous territories, lakes and rivers are despoiled by foreign intrusive oil and gas pipelines with impunity.

So far, the ball is still in our court. Take courage, divest from oil, gas and coal stock; speak up wherever and whenever you can. For the sake of yours and my children, grandchildren and great grandchildren, I hope it's not too late.
Don Brown, and family, Hamilton

Pierre a 'true machiavellian'

Susan Delacourt hits the nail on the head on the possibility of a non-partisan inquiry into foreign interference. She quotes from a Pierre Poilievre tweet to support her opinion. I fear that she has not gone far enough into the state of our democracy. The leader of the official opposition continues to undermine Canadian democracy at every turn. In the same tweet, Skippy blames Trudeau for destroying the reputation of the former governor general. This would be laughable if it weren't so hypocritical.

His words and his actions should be met with caution. He is displaying a personality trait that denotes cunningness, the ability to be manipulative, and a drive to use whatever means necessary to gain power. A true machiavellian.
Don Courtnage, Ancaster

Watch out Canada

A friend of mine who knows that I am a bit of a wordsmith asked me recently what the difference was between the words "spurious" and "specious." The teacher in me thought that the best way to answer him would be by way of example. I said that most of Donald Trump's statements were spurious and most of Pierre Poilievre's were specious. The danger is, of course, that once specious arguments become a matter of acceptable political discourse, spurious speech is sure to follow. Watch out Canada.
David McInnis, Ancaster

Thanks for funeral courtesies

Just wanted to thank the compassionate driver in a white truck who stopped traffic on Rymal Road East on May 1 to allow our lengthy funeral procession to proceed. Perhaps the cars behind him weren't happy, but we were thankful for his lovely gesture, especially in our time of grief.
Irene Johnston and family, Hamilton

Catholic schools need to venture beyond borders

19th-century theology threatens survival

RICHARD SHIELDS

The credibility of Catholic schools seriously faltered with the controversy over gay-straight alliances. Catholic school boards' public stances against cultural trends, from gender-appropriate lavatories to flying the Pride flag, continued to raise the question of the relevance of Catholic schools.

From the early 1800s, fearing the impact of new thinking on the faith of its members, the Vatican undertook an aggressive strategy of resistance to "modernism." From an "index" of "forbidden books" to the prohibition of marriage to non-Catholics, the church strove to insulate itself from what it viewed as false and dangerous teachings of modernity. The result was what one theologian described as "fortress church."

This attitude grounded the establishment of separate (parochial) schools. Along with Catholic youth organizations, associations of Catholic men and women, and strict rules for Sunday observance, fasting and abstinence, this set Catholics off from their Protestant neighbours. There followed a century of militant Catholicism where Catholic families were typically large and the home was the fundamental building block of the Catholic Church.

This social-religious context guaranteed the strength and endurance of a Catholic school system for nearly a century. But this foundation of Catholic identity and commitment has changed.

The parish-home-school triad, which served as the basis for Catholic education, has become dysfunctional. Many couples, parents (even grandparents), teachers and administrators in Catholic institutions find traditional church practices and teachings no longer compelling.

While doctrines and devotions are meant to be bridges to the reality of God in our world, they often suffer from the historical weight of language, world view and global assumptions that have outlived their



AMANDA PERSICO TORSTAR FILE PHOTO

Catholic school students take part in a walkout in support of Pride month as some Catholic boards have decided to not add their backing. Richard Shields argues the Catholic system needs to evolve to stay relevant in a changing world.

ability to clarify and justify Catholic teachings. The fear of giving away the substance of faith, if doctrines are rethought and, where needed, reformulated, is serious. It can also, according to Pope Francis, turn the church "into a museum of local folklore, a world apart, doomed to doing the same things over and over, and incapable of being challenged by novelty or appreciating the beauty which God bestows beyond their borders."

Catholic schools need to venture beyond their self-imposed borders.

Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor believes that a "Christendom where certain central beliefs or ways of life are taken for granted by all" can no longer be reclaimed. Church responses to divisive cultural and moral issues of the day, let alone the enigmas of human existence, make little sense even to the contemporary Catholics.

It is not that Catholic parents, teachers and students don't believe; but in their struggle to understand, "they simply do not feel invited to express what they are looking for," according to Taylor. When doctrines and moral teachings don't make sense in terms of what Catholics experience, credibility weakens. The disconnect between

home-school-parish widens.

Within the church, and within Catholic education, there needs to be a space for dialogue.

Catholic schools have a credibility crisis that goes beyond challenges to public funding. If they do not move out of a narrow framework of a so-called "Catholicity," they risk public ridicule. But on a deeper level, Catholic school boards need to work to restore the now dysfunctional triad of parish-school-family. They need to address the disconnect between religious ideology and faithful practice.

Finally, according to sociologist of religion Hans Joas, they have to learn to judge themselves by the same high standards they use to judge the cultural trends they fear.

I still believe that Catholic education can enrich the social fabric of Ontario. Catholic schools, in fact, can be beacons of values and meaning in a secular world. But to do this, school boards and their trustees need to move out of a 19th-century theology and learn what the worldwide body of Catholic bishops already proclaimed in 1965, as the "role of the church in the modern world."

RICHARD SHIELDS IS A CATHOLIC LIVING IN DUNDAS.

Fatherhood is better than gold — don't take it for granted



THOMAS FROESE
OPINION

"We're losing Jonathan." I blurted out the words in the backyard to my sister during a recent gathering.

Jonathan, that's Jonathan Thomas Froese, Child No. 2. The boy. It felt strange to hear the words tumble from my mouth.

We're not losing Jon to any prodigal ways. Or to terminal illness. And we're not losing him like we lost him some years ago in Uganda, the day when we — his two sisters, his mother, myself, and others — were looking for him rather frantically.

We circled the house and ran up and down nearby banana patches and called and called and called his name.

Finally, while I faced dark thoughts about what can happen to a lost little boy in a place like Uganda, I found him asleep in his bedroom closet, behind a blanket on a shelf five feet up.

Good grief. Yes, if you're a new father — Canada has about nine million dads — Happy Father's Day, man. Now get used to it, this certain anxiety that fits parents like a glove. Wear it well. It's part of the package, and the deal, nothing to be ashamed or afraid of. Your fears, in fact, are a sign of your love, imperfect and human as it is.

Another day, by the way, my boy came home to announce to me that he'd lost his underwear at school. This isn't to embarrass him, (there are worse things to lose in life than your underwear), as much as to say that the best way around common parental anxiety is to hold onto everyday humour.

Anyway, like enough other young people, Jonathan is being lost to university. In this case, he'll soon leave home for aerospace engineering studies a good train ride away. Sure, we'll still connect. But his mother and I will fiercely miss our boy's easygoing presence.

I'm reminded that while the days of raising your kids can go slow, the years go strangely fast. So be intentional. The time is like gold, really, not to be squandered.

Of course, a man with a dime can squander it, just like a man with a million dollars can squander that. But whatever you have, don't be like the poor dad in that old Harry Chapin song, "Cat's in the Cradle," who foolishly squanders it all. "We'll get together then, son." Sure. But dad is always distracted by lesser things and, no surprise, his boy is later absent, "just like dad."

Like any father, there are things I wish I'd never said to my son. And things I wish I'd said more often. But my boy has my eyes, and when I'm not looking entirely frayed, anyone can see this.

I'm pleased about this because there's something about the eyes

and the soul. Something redeeming.

But even if Jonathan didn't look anything like me (hats off to all the stepdads and adoptive dads out there) I'm more pleased about other things.

There are balls and gloves and bikes and blades all worn to one degree or another. Movies have been watched, as have sports and games, many with my son in them. Photos abound.

We've sometimes taken off, just us two men, to here and there where we might drive country roads faster than we should, or climb steep lake-side bluffs, or sit in the gentle morning light at that pier near that Canadian flag, with our breakfast or ice cream or thoughts about nothing in particular.

For Jonathan's 18th birthday, same as for his sisters, he and I will go west to the mountains before returning east through the Prairies, eventually home.

Which is all to say that I'm a lucky father, a lucky "Paps" as Jonathan calls me, to have a boy who still humours me with such times together.

Because for this Paps, it really is all like gold. Only better. If you've experienced something similar, don't ever forget it. Don't take it for granted, either. Not on Father's Day. Or any other day.

Thank you, son.
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