

LETTERS

Share wealth with grocery staff

Recently, grocery chains have made headlines because of their profits and because of security checking receipts.

In a casual conversation with one of the staff at Fortinos, I asked whether staff had received a pay increase recently. "No" was the response.

I wondered whether they benefited in other ways. Do they get a discount on their purchases in the store. "No."

The inflation rate for food is running higher than the overall inflation rate. Fortinos employees who work in the store contribute in a major way to the overall experience of shopping there. For me, it is a positive experience. I always find staff to be helpful and friendly.

In light of the high rate of inflation for food and the extraordinary profits, it seems to me that it would be appropriate for Fortinos and other grocery chains to share their increasing wealth with their employees who make this possible.

In my mind, it is the least that they can do.
Hinda Levine, Hamilton

HATS is the answer

I agree with much of David Morgan's opinion piece in The Hamilton Spectator on July 7. But where I digress is that homeless Hamiltonians deserve better. Sanctioned encampments in vacant lots, not parks, is a step in the right direction.

The right direction is to provide toilets and running water in a location such as the vacant Barton-Tiffany lands, the old Dominion Glass property near Barton Street and Gage Avenue, the Cathedral Park behind Fortinos on Dundrum Street, Eastport Drive where it curves under the Skyway Bridge and other locations.

The solution to the problem is HATS, the Hamilton Alliance for Tiny Shelters. Tent encampments, once sanctioned sites have been selected, can be turned into villages of 25 or more tiny shelters within three months of building. Villages of tiny shelters would have individual cabins with heating and air conditioning, a bed, a microwave and mini-fridge, and a lock on the door. There would also be washrooms with showers and a communal kitchen in separate buildings.

The residents would have wrap-around support of social workers, a doctor, nurses, counsellors for those with addictions and 24-7 supervision in a fenced area away from neighbourhoods.

When supportive, permanent affordable housing finally becomes available, they would transition to those dwellings; all for the cost of about \$700,000 per site.

Let's get started on HATS plan to provide dignity to homeless people.
Chet Kras, Hamilton

Let traffic staff do their jobs

I live in the middle of a one-block-long street. Upon returning home, the traffic department installed two speed limit signs on the same pole back to back on my driveway.

Doesn't take a rocket scientist to know this does not work.

A speed bump would have been more practical, even though there are no speeding cars travelling to Breadalbane on this street since the inception of bike lanes and a roundabout.

I understand our councillors want to keep pedestrians safe, but they have no skill in forcing their traffic decisions on once-organized neighbourhoods. Time to let traffic staff do their jobs.
Ted Lazich, Hamilton

These rate hikes hurt

The Bank of Canada has raised interest rates once again due to the fact that inflation (greed) is still not under control. It said consumer demand was still too strong. Grocery inflation (greed) is at an all-time high, same with gas.

Is it suggesting we should demand less food and park our cars so those prices will go down? By using interest rate hikes to lower inflation (greed) it will in turn only hurt the segment of the population who can least afford it. I wonder how long before people will have had enough.
Tony Fallucco, Hamilton

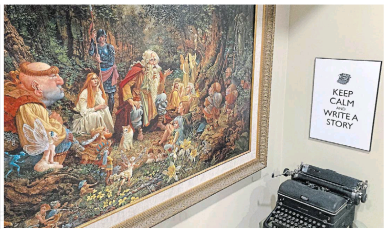
No better time to be a Liberal

As the Ford government continues moving Ontario backward on housing, health care, schooling, the environment, etc., the movement to replace him at the next election continues to grow. Enough is enough.

The next provincial election may seem a long time away, but the hard work to build a strong opposition to replace Doug Ford starts today. The Ontario Liberal Party (OLP) is in the process of finding its new leader — the person to take on Ford and become the next premier of Ontario. You can help select that leader.

As a member of the OLP, you have a real say on the direction of the party and the future of Ontario. There is no better time to be an Ontario Liberal.

In their bid for the leadership, the OLP leadership candidates are hosting "meet and greets" in Hamilton over the summer and in the fall. Come meet them, ask them tough questions about their vision for the future of Ontario, and help your preferred candidate become the next leader of the OLP. We need the best candidate to win to make the Ford government history. Join us today and let us help that happen.
Heino Dassing, secretary, Hamilton Mountain Provincial Liberal Association



James Christensen's "Once Upon a Time" hangs in the home office of columnist Thomas Froese. Commenting on our faces, Froese writes, "In an era when we can easily hide our true selves behind one mask or another, especially screens, it's a remarkable picture of vulnerability."

It's best to look difficult things, even evil, in the face



THOMAS FROESE
OPINION

Time for something about faces.

I realize that some of us aren't enthusiastic about this. We easily compare our noses and eyes and brows and such to the perfectly-contoured face of some knockout celebrity, or glamour ad, or air-brushed fantasy.

That's unhelpful. Don't compare yourself to others. For anything. It's like flying into the sun with paper wings. The Laughing Man, a character from the world of letters, never compared. Never complained. Never gave a flip about the cards he was dealt.

Which is to say that if you're looking for a fine summer read, you can do worse than this J.D. Salinger short story, "The Laughing Man." I read it now and again to keep perspective on my own face. My mug.

"Mug" or "mug shot" is what newsrooms traditionally called the photo that accompanies columns or guest commentaries. That's right, the same unflattering term that police use to identify criminals. For most columnists that's just coincidence.

Most columnists also don't like changing their mug shots more than every 1,000 years. Even so, today I've updated mine. Yesterday I turned a year older. It seemed time to freshen up.

Anyway, about the Laughing Man.

While he's no criminal deserving something as unbecoming as a mug shot, he is very much pursued by the authorities, often at the Paris-China border. (Yes, yes, remember Salinger writes fiction and he's having some fun with geography.)

You should also be informed that as a boy the Laughing Man fell victim to nefarious bandits who kidnapped him. When his parents refused to pay ransom, the shameless villains put his little head in a carpenter's vice with the appropriate turns to the right. The result, of course, left him ugly as sin.

I can't share with you the exact details and extent of his facial contortions — I'm bound by the ethics and good taste of this publication — but, suffice to say, the Laughing Man wore a mask, not unlike Joseph Merrick, the so-called "Elephant Man," the real-life, 19th-century British medical patient who covered his face to avoid the taunts of children and mindless bullies.

The Laughing Man took his mask off, while in the good company of his forest friends, animals like dogs and mice and lions and eagles and box constrictors. They always accepted him without question or reserve. With this wholesome nourishment, the Laughing Man not only dodged the authorities, but made a mockery of their efforts to capture and contain him.

You'll have to explore the rest of Salinger's story at your leisure with a cool, summer drink. But here are two closing notes. First, I read the story, again, while recently travelling with my son across a swath of

Canada, 7,000-kilometre return. We explored. That included the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg. "People can do horrible things to each other," I said aloud.

Even so, it's always best to look difficult things, even evil, in the face. This presumably is why former newspaper magnate Izzy Asper envisioned the \$350-million museum, a remarkable Canadian landmark and public provision of the highest order, one to visit if you're even remotely close.

Second, it's good to be back home, including in my home office where, beside an antiquated typewriter, hangs a significant painting, well-framed, the largest in the house, James Christensen's print called "Once Upon a Time." Think Narnia. Or Middle Earth.

It shows, naturally, a time-worn storyteller. With a gloriously matchless face, he's in a forest telling stories to ogres and scamps and imps and innocents, an assorted woodland bunch with their own gloriously-bare, irreplaceable mugs. In an era when we can easily hide our true selves behind one mask or another, especially screens, it's a remarkable picture of vulnerability.

"I'll look like that when I'm old," I sometimes joke to visitors. The old storyteller. Maybe. Other days I think it's equally fine to be the racial who just sits and listens alertly.

THOMAS FROESE WRITES ABOUT NEWS, TRAVEL AND LIFE. READ HIS COLLECTED WORK AT THOMASFROESE.COM.

Are we willing to pay the price?

ALEXANDER T. POLGAR

There is no right time to write this and every time is the right time to write it.

To understand hatred, racism, prejudice, white supremacy, misogyny, terrorism and every other abuse of the other requires a very brief introduction to Human Growth and Development. Cross-cultural longitudinal studies have demonstrated that all people progress through an invariant hierarchical sequence of development. Simply, one stage follows another. In order for this to happen conditions have to be right. And conditions have never, ever, been right for most people. That is why these various forms of hate of the other have always existed and why prophets, philosophers and the enlightened have always been telling us that we don't have to live this way. That there is a better way, here and now available to us all.

The way we have been living is in a state of developmental stagnation. Specifically, half way up the hierarchical stages of development. Most, almost all of us, are tribal. It is an awful stage for teenagers, check out the movie "Mean Girls," and even worse when adults are stuck

there. And they are stuck because environmental conditions are not conducive to activating the innate potential with which we are all born. In fact the environmental conditions are such as to drive the frightened masses to seek the safety, security and shelter of a tribe. All that is required for membership is accepting the tribe's values, beliefs and ways of behaving. For the most part the choice of a tribe is happenstance, place and circumstance determined.

Most would like to believe there is a remedy for all this. Expose, especially the shadowy hate tribes, because sunlight cleanses. Enact and enforce harsher punitive consequences, shame the guilty and scare us all about following in the footsteps of the great exitable U.S. of A. Those who subscribe to this pleasing magical way of thinking likely are unaware of the Ten Commandments delivered to humanity by the Big Guy Himself. Arguably each and every one of those mortal sins continue to be committed each and every day despite the threat of eternal damnation. The well-intentioned also present as unaware that when attacked tribes go underground and unite against the attackers.

Rules and their enforcement can and do help, but it is more than that that is required. Instead of superficial change achieved through disproportionately great efforts it is time for progress.

Progress now is far more possible than ever before. We now know so much more than any of the prophets, philosophers and the enlightened ever did before. We have the knowledge, skills and evidence-supported methods to create environments conducive to activating our innate developmental potential. Fair warning however, when not, if we do this most of us will then out-grow being stuck at tribalism. This hopefully will mean the end of all tribes. This will be a very good, long overdue accomplishment. It will be progress, simply because there is no good adult tribe. Tribalism will only be the domain of adolescents, unavoidable but brief.

Are we willing to pay the price for growing up? Are we willing to give up our adult religious, political, ethnic, occupational, regional, sport, etc. tribes to eradicate the misery humanity has had to endure since the beginning of time? Are we willing to embrace the notion of spirituality, living in harmony with our essence of continuous development, living in harmony with all others and our environment? Are we even willing to entertain the idea of a possible future that is now, more than ever before, within our grasp?

ALEXANDER T. POLGAR, PH.D. WRITES MOSTLY ABOUT PREVENTIVE, AS OPPOSED TO REACTIVE, MEASURES.