

## LETTERS

## The wisdom of Ms. Thunberg

Tucked away on page A6 of a recent Monday paper are two climate disaster stories, one from the East Coast, one from the West. These are two of literally hundreds of such stories this year.

At the Davos World Economic Forum 4 1/2 years ago regarding the climate crisis, Greta Thunberg said the following to the folks who run the world: "I want you to act as if your house is on fire." No one paid much attention. She had just turned 16, went around holding up signs and didn't defer to her elders. Guess what? She was right.

Is anyone acting like it? No. That would require politicians to show leadership and ability — both in very short supply. It would require the rest of us to inconvenience ourselves — unlikely given the rampant selfishness that is our culture.

Unfortunately, we do not possess the wisdom of Ms. Thunberg. Unless we find it quickly, it will not end well for us.

Michael Blythe, Scotland

## Back to the bomb shelter

Regarding "Nuclear war prompts Ottawa to update plans," (July 24): It's good to see that public affairs, essential executives, legislative, judicial processes, the Prime Minister's Office, the federal cabinet, Parliament and the Supreme Court get a modern version of a nuclear catastrophe plan to move all government and leaders of business into a private government underground installation. It's good to know that in a nuclear explosion, key federal partners will be notified also of incoming strikes and the Diefenbunker will provide shelter for many years to come for our federal government. And, as always, everyone else can fend for themselves. It looks like it would be a good time to open up a business producing bomb shelters in backyards.

Michael Hagan and Tracey Gordon, Hamilton

## On papal apologies

Regarding "Path to reconciliation taken slowly," (July 24): an apology from the Catholic Church for any wrongs committed at residential schools in Canada is too important a matter for error. Kelly Geraldine Malone is incorrect in stating that "Benedict didn't oblige." On April 29, 2009, Pope Benedict XVI held a meeting in the Vatican with a delegation of Indigenous people, headed by Phil Fontaine, Chief of the Assembly of First Nations. Fontaine is quoted by the CBC as saying, after the meeting, that he hoped the Pope's expression of regret would "close the book" on the issue of apologies for residential school survivors. Accounts of the historic occasion are available on the internet.

Alan McComas, Burlington

## Let Freeland take over

Justin Trudeau has changed his cabinet including getting rid of poor performers such as Marco Mendicino. That was part of the problem as the performance of the government starts at the top. Trudeau should go and let others like Christia Freeland take over.

Kevin Argue, Jordan Station

## Ducking responsibility

The cabinet shuffle is a peculiar tradition where ministers take on a new role and immediately cease to be responsible for their past actions and errors. I am sure that all practising lawyers, doctors and accountants would love the same immunity where they could just change their title in the firm and absolve themselves of all liabilities up to that date.

Edward A. Collis, Burlington

## Jama's learning curve

Regarding "Jama needs to go," (July 25): I, too, was upset by MPP Sarah Jama's most recent participation in a public rally supporting BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) and abolishing police.

This comes on the heels of Ms. Jama's antisemitic remarks at a pro-Palestinian event. Furthermore, the patronizing apology she issued one day prior to the election was equally troubling.

To gain credibility in her role as MPP, Ms. Jama must transition smoothly from political activist and protester. It is only by distancing herself from the BDS and defunding police movements that she can represent all constituents of our riding in the effective and bias-free manner.

Andrea Rado, Hamilton

## Pictures tell a story

I don't think readers realize how much "news" is packed into a photograph. There is usually only a short time to complete the assignment, many times one photo must capture the story. With composition, lighting and content, competing for attention throughout the paper.

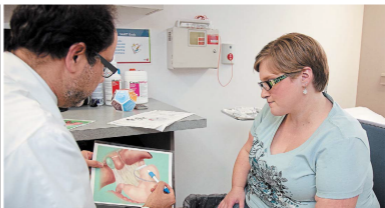
Congratulations John Rensison on your career. Enjoy photography for years to come.

Tom Bochsler, Hamilton



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Megha Poddar and Sean Wharton explain how and why biology, not a lack of willpower, is really behind the epidemic of obesity in our society.

## Biology, not willpower, is fuelling our obesity epidemic

MEGHA PODDAR AND SEAN WHARTON

Since the time a human first used a tool to make life easier, increased weight has been inevitable.

From that day, the amazing and rapid progress of human achievement has been on a parallel trajectory with the growing availability of calories and the health and social consequences — initially positive — that have come with it.

Through most of human history, our species has had to cope with food scarcity. Scrounging enough calories to stay alive was a struggle, and our ability to compete and survive sometimes meant enduring long breaks between scarce meals.

When food was abundant, our bodies stored excess energy in the form of fat to draw upon when food was not available.

Human ingenuity allowed our predecessors to harness fire, create weapons for hunting and invent farming. Our brains enabled our species to develop an easier, more comfortable life and a steady supply of food to support population growth.

Today, mountains of calorie-rich food and lakes of sugary beverages are readily available in much of the world. It's no longer necessary to leave home — or even stand up — to access this cornucopia.

Our biology has not yet caught up to our progress, though. Our metabolism remains calibrated for a hard, uncomfortable life where every bite had to be earned through strenuous physical effort, and our

brains are still telling us to eat more than we need.

Polygenic obesity — the inherited predisposition to consume and store calories — is the inevitable outcome of our primal instincts colliding with amazing, man-made abundance. It's also what makes it so hard to lose excess fat and keep it off. From our clinical work and our research in obesity we know that while some people can carry extra weight and be truly healthy, others suffer serious health consequences, including diabetes, high blood pressure, cancer and arthritis. For far too long society has treated obesity as a personal failing while in reality it's a biological, physiological, environmental, chronic disease.

The fact is that for many, trying to lose excess fat is very difficult without help. The brain wants us to eat as much as we can because it thinks it's helping us survive.

Despite the prevalent view that people with large bodies should simply eat less and move more, it's nearly impossible to fight our genetic heritage or other factors that are not within our control.

Our body defends its weight vigorously. It changes levels of leptin and insulin, which regulate appetite. Whenever we lose weight by restricting calories, hormones compel our brains to signal increased hunger and decreased fullness and they slow our metabolism in an effort to retain body fat.

In the meantime, another part of our brain, which regulates reward and pleasure, is also working to make us eat more.

The pleasure of eating food is driven by naturally occurring neurochemicals like dopamine, opioids and cannabinoids, to help with survival and energy storage.

Just as human progress brought us problematic obesity, it may also help resolve it.

That begins with accepting that polygenic obesity is a disease and not a matter of willpower. Rather than blaming and shaming one another for our size, we should be more understanding and educate ourselves about obesity, to help take stigma and judgment out of the equation.

It's important to recognize that when obesity does impair one's health, it needs treatment, and effective treatment is available. Canada's 2020 clinical practice guidelines are based on three pillars: bariatric surgery, medication and cognitive psychotherapy.

Psychotherapy is critical to the effectiveness of surgery or medication, or both.

These pillars are the primary interventions that have been shown repeatedly to be able to help people with obesity improve their health while reducing their weight and keeping it off in the long run.

We need less judgment and more science. Progress is possible if we work for it.

MEGHA PODDAR AND SEAN WHARTON ARE WITH MCMASTER UNIVERSITY'S SCHOOL OF MEDICINE, BOTH HAVE EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE IN THE FIELD OF WEIGHT MANAGEMENT. THIS FIRST APPEARED AT THECONVERSATION.COM.

## Relationships need more than good kissing

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THOMAS FROESE  
OPINION

Let's see now: Cynthia, Cloe, Cindy, Carole, Cassandra, ah, here we are. Cathy. The first girl I ever kissed. (Or did she go by Kathy?)

(This doesn't include the failed kissing venture in the park trees involving Penny and Patty with myself and my boyhood buddy, Paul, on that summer day when I should have been home working in the garden.)

But about Cathy. She was a bridesmaid at my sister's wedding. The glasses were clinked. So Cathy and I stood and walked to each other and kissed. I was a shy, pimple of a boy. She was older and attractive and an experienced kisser. Someone snapped a photo. Wowzer.

It comes to mind because I recently read about a survey. (By the way, can the world's surveyors please, PLEASE, just leave us alone with the constant and annoying questions about what we felt about the quality of service?) This particular survey was on, you guessed it, kissing.

It included plenty of Europeans. Apparently, only people in the EU kiss. This explains Brexit. Brits simply don't like kissing. So, according

to the survey, they're lousy kissers. Same with Germans. Well, apparently Germans kiss worse than Brits.

I'm German, and it's true, in grade school here in Ontario the kissing girls never invited me to their parties. I was no hawk in these matters. I wore lederhosen. I was a Bundesliga in a game played by French and Italians. In the kissing survey, the French and Italians were best. And the Italians, champions.

This is interesting because we all know of the French kiss. Ever bear of Italian fries? No. Italian toast? No. So now Italians can out-kiss the French? Then again, this kissing survey was done in (surprise) Florence, Italy. That's like asking an Italian if Maldini, (a popular Italian footballer), is better than Platini, (who's French born).

This is why we should now open things up and have a proper kiss-off. A world kiss-off. Call it the World Cup of Kissing. Invite the Africans. The Asians. Invite kissers from the Arctic. From everywhere. Then, people, we'll have an interesting survey. And a fair one. I mean, visit, say, Brazil and everyone will talk about Pelé. It's true. Everyone has their players. Even Canadians.

I suggest starting with local kiss-offs, then regional and provincial and so forth. For example, Hollywood bombshell Rachel McAdams,

known for lavishly kissing Ryan Gosling on MTV, grew up in St. Thomas. My bride, as it happens, is a native of St. Thomas. My bride (who'd be kissing me) would easily win this kiss-off, so she and I would move on, eventually, I suspect, to the larger world stadium events. ESPN and SEC and TSN would be there.

Speaking of Brazil, I was walking around there one day, a few hours north of Rio, when I passed a mural of the so-called Kiss of the Century. You know, the American sailor and the woman in a white dress in New York's Times Square, kissing after the sailor learned the Second World War had finally ended.

The woman, Greta Zimmer Friedman, had little choice in the matter when George Mendonso spontaneously grabbed and kissed her. In 2023, sailor George might be charged with assault. Even so, even in anxious times, murals in foreign lands show people still don't mind celebrating an honest kiss.

The only other thing to say is that today is my wedding anniversary. That's right, it's been 22 years. So my bride and I will celebrate with, you know, kissing and things. But here's a fun fact. Unwittingly, we wed 20 years to the day after Charles and Di, on July 29, the day those two royals stood on their palace balcony to show the world their kiss royale. Then their marriage exploded like a supernova.

Just saying. It's good to enjoy summer kisses, even as it's good to enjoy summer anniversaries. But good relationships need more than a good kiss.

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