

SUBMISSIONS WELCOME: 660-WORD MAXIMUM, FULL NAME REQUIRED. SEND TO HELLIOTT@THESPEC.COM

## LETTERS

## Get those houses built, Doug

Better hurry and get those houses built, Doug. When all of us old boomer folk pass on, there will be a glut of housing on the market.

Irene Hough, Hamilton

## No more Greenbelt talks

The auditor general's report has confirmed what we all suspected: The removal of lands from Greenbelt protection in Hamilton and other municipalities was a direct result of cronyism, favouritism and what any reasonable person could only see as outright corruption.

Hamilton and other municipalities need to immediately withdraw from any negotiations with the Ministry of Housing about development of land removed from the Greenbelt. Participating in this flawed and tainted process can only destroy the integrity of any municipal staff member or elected official taking part.

There should be an immediate public announcement of this withdrawal and a motion put before council to immediately freeze any development proposed for the lands removed from the Greenbelt.

John Roy Lawrence, Hamilton

## Time to cut fossil fuel ties

I can't stop thinking about the photos and videos of the wildfires from Hawaii.

It was sobering to see the coast guard rescue people who were forced to swim out to sea to escape the flames.

Back here in Canada, more than 13 billion hectares have burned from record-breaking wildfires. The scale of the climate emergency is well beyond anything I thought I would see in my lifetime.

It's infuriating that Big Oil CEOs continue to pocket billions of dollars even though they are the ones to blame for the crisis we're in.

It's time for Canadian political leaders to cut ties with the fossil fuel industry. Make polluters pay for the damage they've caused and don't let them sabotage our plans to build a clean energy future.

Michelle Blake, Hamilton

## No more appeasement

It's been a terrifying summer. If you're scared, too, know that you're not alone. Polling shows the vast majority of us are concerned about the climate crisis.

But I'm still hopeful because I know we have all the solutions necessary to change course and avoid future disasters. The only thing stopping us is the fossil fuel industry, which is doing everything in its power to block action.

Enough is enough. This moment must be a wake-up call for our government to finally stop appeasing Big Oil and start putting our communities first. So far, Parliament has talked the talk, but they're still propping up fossil fuel companies with subsidies and support for false climate solutions. It's time for an all-out push to make polluters pay and get fossil fuels off our power grid and out of our politics!

Susan MacPhail, Hamilton

## Gun owners want respect

Regarding "Pity the poor gun owners" (Aug. 10): In this letter, the writer appears to take a convenient and sarcastic approach to the concerns of law-abiding gun owners.

Whether the writer has any appreciation or understanding of the sport-shooting world, she might care to consider that these citizens are well within bounds to fight for their rights and to protect their current legal status as gun owners and sport shooters.

It is so easy to mischaracterize the gun issue when the source of the majority of gun-related crimes is found in the illegal importation and possession of, primarily, handguns. And these weapons, in the hands of the criminally minded, are clearly a huge and tragic problem.

We are much further ahead when we try to understand the concerns of others and when we keep the discourse civil and respectful.

Chris Carroll, Hamilton

## Spec is antisemitic

Regarding "BDS movement is not antisemitic" (Aug. 8): Once again, The Spec prints a letter that is nonsense.

These same people who fight for human rights say nothing about the worst human abuse offenders in the world... Yemen, Iran, China, Egypt, Syria, North Korea, Syria, Cuba, Libya and on and on. Why would they choose Israel as their one and only point of concern? It doesn't take much to figure it out.

Steve Berenbaum, Hamilton

## Failed by DARTS

What happened to that wonderful service seniors had before the virus? Is it funding, personnel, equipment? So many seniors relied upon DARTS for rides and professional assistance.

City council, don't let this essential service slip away from the position it once held here in Hamilton. Surely there is government funding or a pay-per-ride solution. I personally have been turned down seven out of 10 attempts for rides to the hospital, etc. There must be a way to fix it.

Glenn Lloyd, Dundas



JOHN RENNISSON THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR FILE PHOTO

Tents set up in Hamilton's Woodlands Park. Front-line workers, advocates and residents have their say on an alternative encampment policy for the city.

## The word on encampments from people who live there

## THE PEOPLE'S ROUNDTABLE

The People's Roundtable — consisting of people in Hamilton who have experienced homelessness (including current encampment residents), members of Keeping Six, and the Hamilton Social Medicine Response Team — have come together to develop a People's Protocol around encampments in response to the proposed protocol the City of Hamilton released in May 2023. We denounce the policies the city has taken up around encampments, and the recent so-called community consultations. We denounce the financialization of housing and the resulting realities of people being deprived of safe and dignified housing. We demand that city council adopt the People's Protocol immediately.

Encampments come from decades of harmful and bad-faith policies from all levels of government. Instead of fulfilling their responsibility to ensure safe and dignified housing for all, successive governments have privatized housing and social supports to corporations and institutions, and are now blaming individuals for failing to thrive within these disastrous living conditions. Housing isn't affordable in Hamilton through the private market-based sector. City staff, the federal housing advocate and Hamilton city council all recognize housing as a fundamental human right. This means that everyone has a right to safe, secure and dignified housing. By not directing their efforts toward providing this housing immediately, the City of Hamilton has denied unhoused people the

very human right that all levels of governments claim to uphold. The most recent mortality data released by health care providers in Hamilton reveals that 14 people have died in Hamilton while homeless between Dec. 1, 2022, and May 31, 2023.

By opening the right to shelter up for public debate and scorn through so-called community consultations on encampments, and by not prioritizing safe and dignified housing for all, the city has devalued people's lives, while increasing the risk of harm for those of us who are unhoused. And by proposing an encampment policy built on policing, the city has further criminalized those who are deprived of housing. We are living in a context where dignified, affordable housing is rarely accessible, and where people living in encampments don't have access to basic needs like bathrooms, showers, garbage disposal or drinking water.

We demand change.

The ongoing harassment and attacks on encampments by some house Hamiltonians is unacceptable, and have understandably amplified safety concerns for those living in encampments. The city's public debates about encampments have amplified the violence people living in encampments are facing. Reliance on policing, surveillance and criminalization has further marginalized us and made us less safe, forcing us to choose locations to stay with fewer community members around.

We survive under constant threat of displacement and with a continuous cycle of new neighbours. Our

energy is used to repeatedly find new spaces as we wait for housing. Threats of violence, enforcement and displacement harm our communities, our relationships and impact our ability to care for our surroundings and each other.

A commitment to a human rights-based approach, which city council named as a priority, necessitates a commitment to defunding both police and bylaw services. The police budget received a \$12-million increase this year, comprising almost 20 per cent of the overall city budget. No other sector in Hamilton has seen such large annual budget increases despite the urgent and rapidly growing need for housing and other social services. The funds previously earmarked for enforcement should be put into housing first and foremost.

It is important that any plans or policies regarding encampments prioritize encampment residents' input as expertise, and centre us in any decision-making. With this in mind, we have developed, with help from people who support us, an encampment protocol ("The People's Protocol"). We are calling on the City of Hamilton to implement the People's Protocol immediately to reduce the harms toward encampment residents and redirect its focus and resources into securing safe and dignified housing for all.

THE PEOPLE'S ROUNDTABLE ON ENCAMPMENTS IS COMPRISED OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS WHO ARE CURRENTLY OR HAVE PREVIOUSLY BEEN UNHOUSED, KEEPING SIX HARM REDUCTION ACTION LEAGUE (K6), AND THE HAMILTON SOCIAL MEDICINE RESPONSE TEAM (HAMSMAKRT).

## Without our feet, we're going nowhere



THOMAS FROESE  
OPINION

Today I'd like to give some advice to Canada's soccer players. But first let me say that I've decided to finally start that rock 'n' roll band. We'll call ourselves "The Barenaked Feet." This is because "The Barenaked Ladies" is taken and "The Barenaked Men" conveys certain images that many people, especially women, will just laugh at.

I've also decided to fire the cleaning lady. I called a family meeting. "Dad's starting a band, 'The Barenaked Feet!'" explained the children's mother. "And he's firing the cleaning lady." The children (who aren't really children; one is now quite tall and hairy) gave me strange looks. This is because I'm not musical. And we have no cleaning lady. I'm the cleaning lady.

The house cleaning, or lack of, goes with the bare feet. Which relates to the soccer players. But everything goes back to my father. "Son," he said, "Shoes are bad for your health. They block the earth's magnetism." So I grew up running around in bare feet.

I had some doubts, but even so avoided north and south poles where the earth's magnetism is strongest and able to pull wandering boys into China. And even now, during morning walks with the dog, or during the high-powered meetings I have on this topic with corporate heads of this newspaper, I'll still slip off my footwear for a good morning airing-out of the feet.

(OK, in truth, corporate heads haven't yet agreed to meet with me. But my father, a therapeutic massage therapist who practised for 60 years, was very much a barefoot advocate. And, funny enough, the first newspaper I worked at had a relaxed managing editor who loved walking around the newsroom in her bare feet.)

But back to house cleaning. For the happiest feet, I suggest simply letting your home's dirt gather as high as possible. You might also bring in truckloads of dirt to grow grass right inside your house. Morning, dewy grass is especially helpful according to the Barefoot Movement. This is a new wave of barefooters encouraging more of us to live like Shoeless Joe, especially in our anxious and medicated time.

the new, old science. Go figure. Dad Froese wasn't crazy. And if you want to earth pad at home? Now you can buy dirt pads for, say, the home office.

Now I'm not one to give unsolicited advice. But about Canada's soccer players. Does anyone maybe want to rethink some basic foot training? I mean there's a reason Australia hosted this summer's World Cup and then knocked out our beloved Canadian women. Australia is the western world's leading barefoot culture. Down Under, if you wear anything, you might wear just a thong. (No, not that thong. This thing is a thin rubber sandal.)

Yes, Australia, Canada's warmer cousin is one relaxed, sure-footed, nation. Going shopping? Go shoeless. The movie theatre? Shoes are optional. Going elsewhere downtown? Same. Uptown? Come on, dude, be earthy. Be grounded. What's with the shoes? Sure, shoes are still often worn, especially in big cities. But who founded today's Barefoot Movement and hosts its podcasts? Paul Thompson, a podiatrist based in, you guessed it, Australia.

Now we still have some summer shoes. So isn't it time to give credit where it's due? Let's give the world's feet a hand. Give them a song. I'd call it, "Don't worry. Be happy, feet."

And in our everyday world of body parts, if you think of yourself as just a lowly foot, don't worry about this either. Roll with it. We all have our place. The truth is, the party wouldn't be complete without you. In fact, without you, nobody's going anywhere.

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