

## LETTERS

## Thanks for nothing Ford

Regarding "Ancaster Greenbelt housing could put overnight airport operations at risk" (Sept. 12): Way to go, Ford (I refuse to call you premier, you are not my premier any more). Not only have you given your developer friends an \$8.3-billion windfall, you are taking away jobs at Canada's busiest cargo airport by allowing homes within the noise area dictated by Hamilton. The airport was there first. Hamilton shouldn't change the rules to stop 24-7 cargo operations. I can only hope buyers won't be stupid enough to buy homes where noise will be a problem and have to fight city hall over it.

Dennis Martin, Binbrook

## Wondering about our leaders

Regarding new housing and the airport: With everything I've read lately, it makes one wonder about our so-called experts leading our province. Growing up I was taught to take time to research what you plan to do, take the time to ensure it is a viable option and decision and think about the outcome.

The individuals in power know there are rules and policies in place for a reason. They should also know most of us are not stupid, so they shouldn't think we are going to sit by and let this happen. Haste makes waste should be on the provincial letterhead as a reminder to them all.

Mary Hickey, Burlington

## The reason for letters

A Sept. 8 letter writer is "disappointed" when The Spec prints opinions that do not reflect his own. In my opinion, that's what letters to the editor are all about.

Ian Powrie, Burlington

## I've got mine, nuts to you

I am in total agreement with the writer who cited Galbraith's quote regarding the Conservatives' ongoing search for a moral justification for selfishness. Having watched these mutts in action since Dief the Chief, I describe their mantra another way: "every man for himself, I've got mine, nuts to you."

Bill Brush, Hamilton

## Unintended sarcasm?

Concerning the letter: "Spec unfair to Pierre and Doug" (Sept. 7): I can't think of any effort or ideas by either of them that deserve credit. I guess the writer was being sarcastic.

To indicate that you are using sarcasm, you should end your message with "/s."

Douglas Doede, Burlington

## Still a democracy, Doug

As is well known, Canada has a severe housing crisis. The question has been raised (and not answered by Mr. Ford) ... why hasn't our illustrious premier considered protecting the Greenbelt and building housing, too?

To repeat Ford's own housing affordability advisory group along with municipal planners ... all agree that Greenbelt lands are not needed to meet housing targets.

Another question he has never answered: how much of that would be affordable housing?

While he appears to ignore this serious situation, he is busy offering "strong mayor" powers to a number of larger Ontario cities. If I understand his offer of strong mayor powers, it will include allowing mayors to propose housing-related bylaws and pass them with only the support of one-third of the councillors. This would also override council's approval of certain bylaws.

Does the premier really think Hamilton's mayor (or any other Ontario mayors) would accept this draconian offer? This is an insult to our intelligence.

This strong mayor play is nothing more than bypassing city council, so the premier has only to deal with and strong-arm one person — the mayor.

Mr. Ford appears to have conveniently forgotten that Canada is a democracy.

Jacque Reid, Hamilton

## Getting rich at our expense

As reported by The Canadian Press on Sept. 6, Enbridge Inc., a Calgary-based company, has signed a \$14-billion (U.S.) cash-and-debt deal that represents a major vote of confidence by the Canadian company in the future of natural gas. It plans to spend \$9.1 billion in cash to purchase three U.S. utilities.

Where did all this cash come from, you say? With the complexity of the government regulators, natural gas has tripled the cost of home heating in the past three years — and not with the intention of providing better service to customers but it appears to embark on an acquisition spree to further centralize the market, leading to further rate hikes for Canadian consumers. Runaway rates sanctioned by government regulators are not market driven but rather a recipe for making shareholders and company executives rich at our expense.

Jim Gillatly, Ancaster

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Daniel Levy, right, with his father Eugene at the Emmy awards. Of the importance of his English teacher to his success, Daniel said she ensured she had "a safe space for ideas to be shared ... without fear of failure or embarrassment."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE PHOTO

## The value of great teachers, as described by their students

HUGHENA MATHESON

"What do teachers make?" You often hear that question now when teacher union contracts are in the news. I have the perfect answer. "You want to know what teachers make? Teachers make every other profession possible."

Teachers make doctors, lawyers, accountants and even actors like Al Pacino.

He grew up in the Bronx, a rough neighbourhood, in a home where no one ever asked him how his school day went. Living in the Bronx, acting was not a realistic career goal. But Pacino caught the attention of a teacher.

Blanche Rothstein, his Grade 8 teacher, was impressed with how well he read Bible verses at a school assembly. She made the effort to go to the small flat where he lived with his mother and grandparents to tell them that Al should pursue acting as a career.

"This was 'the first time I ever had an interviewer,'" Pacino told John Lehr, a writer with *The New Yorker*. Rothstein cast him in school plays and at the end of junior high, Pacino was voted "most likely to succeed." And, the rest is history!

Many Canadian celebrities also give credit to their teachers for much of their success. Daniel Levy, writer, star of *Schitt's Creek* and son of Hamiltonian Eugene Levy, no doubt inherited the creative gene

from his father. But, he gives credit to Anne Carrier, his English teacher at North Toronto C.I., for building up his confidence to write by creating "a safe space for ideas to be shared ... without fear of failure or embarrassment."

Astronaut Chris Hadfield learned more than mathematics in Dean Murray's Grade 13 math classes at Milton D.H.S. Murray taught his students a disciplined approach to solving each new math problem, an approach that transferred to problems in general.

As Hadfield notes, "It was an attitude he taught that has been useful for me right across the board and absolutely made a contribution to my success."

Sarah Polley fondly remembers her grade school teacher. Polley, filmmaker and winner of an Oscar for best adapted screen play (*Women Talking*), recalls Bev Panikkar, her Grade 2 teacher at Bayview School in Toronto, as a positive influence. In 1985, this was Polley's school day: "I spent days and days when I was in Grade 2 writing stories. I would just go in like it was an office to get it done, and Mrs. Panikkar would let me read my stories to the class."

As a teacher for decades, I saw how my colleagues influenced their students. Drama and music teachers magically changed shy students into confident stage performers. Science teachers inspired students

to wonder and become engineers and doctors. Teachers in the technical department encouraged their students to become skilled tradesmen. English teachers awakened their students' creative voices and fostered their written and oral expression, skills essential in most professions.

As the school year begins, I have a few messages.

Students, teachers are not the enemy. They want you to succeed. If they are often "on your case," that is more proof they want you to succeed. Looking back at my teachers, I learned the most from those who demanded the most.

Parents, don't bash teachers! Show respect. Your attitudes to teachers and school rub off on your children. The education partnership does include both parents and teachers.

Teachers, you are society's most valuable professionals. You will have your rewards, when, by chance, you meet former students who remember how much your class meant to them. One might even send you a thank-you letter as Polley did to Panikkar.

Polley encourages others to do the same: "There must be thousands of teachers walking around right now who couldn't possibly know the impact that they've had on someone's life and on who they've become."

HUGHENA MATHESON LIVES IN BURLINGTON.

## The upside of the married mantra



THOMAS FROESE OPINION

Here's something for young people. Who you marry will have a larger impact on your life than your career.

I'm reading about it in the *New York Times* and *The Atlantic*. There's a new wave of research. Marry and be happy. This is what it says. It's interesting because it's easy to assume, especially in western culture, that career is at your life's core.

True, marriage isn't for everyone. "Marriage is so unlike anything else," is how George Eliot puts it in "Middlemarch," her epic novel. "There's something nearly awful in the nearness it brings." That was in 1871.

Today, marriage draws even more suspicion. The average Canadian marriage now lasts just 14 years. This summer, our own prime minister separated. Why launch your life ship into such perilous waters? It's like the outdoor wedding I recently attended. Of course, it rained. Just poured. The bride — not that she really cared — got soaked. It's one picture of marriage today.

Still, there are plenty of encouraging marital stories out there. And marriage can have significant downstream benefits.

Consider in recent decades, according to surveys, North Americans not only marry less, but are less happy. Researchers like Sam Peltzman, a Chicago economist and academic, connects the two. After looking at variables of income, education, race, location and gender, he comes to one conclusion. Married people are happier. Period.

Take 50 marriages. Forty will be happy and 10 unhappy. Take 50 singles (divorced, widowed or never-married) and it's closer to an even 25-25 split between happy and unhappy. This is Peltzman's research.

"Get Married," an upcoming book by sociologist Brad Wilcox, has similar conclusions. Responses of being "very happy" in life are more than 500 per cent higher for people who are "very happily" married, compared with the unmarried, or married but not "very happily."

To be clear, this "get married" mantra means marry the right person at the right time. Also, "happiness" can be a hazy idea. You don't go and get "happiness" (or a life partner) like you get a bag of milk from the corner store. Happiness, or contentment, grows from everyday choices, not your marital status.

This from someone who was single well into my 30s. As far as I was concerned, people worrying about my unmarried state were either ignorant meddlers (most were this) or idolaters (you can idolize marriage like you can idolize anything).

So I appreciate singleness. Regardless, what are we to make of

increasingly documented benefits of marriage?

One view is that marriage doesn't change your inner disposition. If you're happy in marriage, it's because you were happy single. Likewise, unhappy while single, unhappy in marriage. (Which leads to divorce and feeds the unhappy, single pool.)

A different view is that marriage, in fact, gives an uptick to your happiness-meter, especially when seeing your spouse as your best friend. We have a deep human need to be known fully, warts and all, and loved, regardless. Committed marriages give this security. Even less formally committed civil unions give a smaller, two-thirds boost in happiness, says one European study.

And about career? Commentator David Brooks suggests this: "Please respect the truism that if you have a great career and a crappy marriage you will be unhappy, but if you have a great marriage and a crappy career you will be happy."

Of course, career and marriage are both important. But do young people study and prepare for marriage with the same investment as their careers? Probably not. Considering the stakes, why not? Where are helpful public courses on, say, "Why some marriages thrive, and others sink?"

Speaking of, here's a fun fact. One of history's better-known ships, the *Mayflower*, set sail today, Sept. 16, in 1620. But even it had to turn back and relaunch — twice — because of a failed companion ship, the *Speedwell*. All the more, then, strengthen the sails of your own ship. When the good wind comes, then you'll know you're ready.

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