

LETTERS

Drivers, not road, need fixing

Regarding "Vehicle crashes into business at Cannon and Ottawa streets — again" (Nov. 2) I have driven through the Ottawa-Cannon intersection many times and noticed its slightly "odd" bend. This is obvious on a map and in the front-page photo.

Looking in the direction of the photo's view, you can see that the far side of the street is slightly to the left of the near side. The crosswalks turn slightly in that direction. It is easy to see that a vehicle that does not adjust to the left is likely to end up near or on the sidewalk on the far side. But to actually hit the building, I am guessing the driver was extremely distracted or speeding through the intersection, or both.

Now imagine a vehicle coming in the other direction; if it doesn't turn slightly and maintain a legal speed, it could run into the building diagonally across the intersection from the first one. The reason these two buildings have been hit seems obvious: poor, inattentive or distracted driving, and high speed.

I agree with the business owner it is the drivers who are the cause. The intersection did not magically get rebuilt two years ago. But we read constantly about poor driving on our streets, especially post-pandemic.

Something needs to be done and, in this case, the solution is to fix the drivers not the intersection.
Gretchen Harris, Hamilton

No wonder they're leaving

Immigrants are leaving Canada because they have quickly found out Canada isn't the land of opportunity and prosperity.

Who would want to come to a country like Canada where the government takes almost half of your income in taxation? Also where the people have to conserve every millilitre of water they use along with every kilowatt-hour of hydro. And where most people can't even afford to purchase food anymore or anything new for their households. Also, because of the high-level of brutally punitive taxation, it will take a skilled 25-year-old immigrant 30 to 40 years just to save for a down payment on their first home.

What Canada has though is an abundance of unscrupulous self-serving politicians.
Charles Owen, Welland

Run it like a business

Why would anyone running a business give out bonuses if employees did not meet and improve their targets? Despite only meeting performance goals less than 60 per cent of the time, federal public servants received just under \$200 million in bonuses last year, mostly to public administration executives. Employees of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation were paid \$16 million in bonus performance incentives in 2022.

It's time for the government to be run like a business and consider the taxpayers as its shareholders whom they need to keep happy for the management to keep their jobs.

Canadians can no longer afford to pay for the fiscal follies and poor performance of this bloated inefficient government when Canada's total provincial and federal debt was \$1.1 trillion to \$2.1 trillion, according to a study by the Fraser Institute.

Plus, in 2022 and 2023, we are expected to pay \$68.6 billion on interest where each citizen will be expected to pay \$2,110 and Quebecers will pay \$2,727 per person on their income taxes.
Alan Morris, Brantford

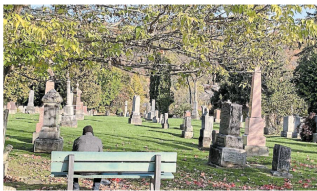
Pedestrians need to follow rules

I keep reading about people getting hit by vehicles. I drove for a company for almost four decades, including thousands of times in the main intersections that seem to have the most problems.

The majority of times it is the pedestrians not following the rules and laws of the road that causes the problems.

On a green light, just like vehicles, a pedestrian is to look both ways to make sure it is clear and be fully focused of their surroundings before walking into an intersection. When the hand light turns red, you cannot cross. If there is a count down, the people already in the intersection are to finish crossing. This also allows time for the vehicles to clear the intersection. Also regarding bicycles, at a pedestrian crosswalk they must walk their bicycles across the road, as per the law. These above problems cause vehicles to get stuck in the intersection when the light turns green in the other direction.

I would hope the City of Hamilton would take the lead and have the bicycle lanes added to the sidewalk system for the safety of all. The majority of drivers of all vehicles in Hamilton do not want the bicycle lanes on the roads. I can say from experience that taking away a four-lane road to make it a two-lane with bike lanes is a delivery person's nightmare. I hope parents and the schools, including the City of Hamilton, start educating the public and also push for the bicycle lanes to be with the sidewalk system so we can all be safe.
Rob Maschewski, Hamilton



Writing about loneliness, columnist Thomas Froese notes having time alone can be quite fine, but human disconnectedness is another matter. "After saying hello to some stranger, rekindle some old friendship," he writes.

THOMAS FROESE PHOTO

People, people everywhere, with nobody to talk to



THOMAS FROESE
OPINION

All the lonely people

Where do they all come from?

All the lonely people

Where do they all belong?

— The Beatles, "Eleanor Rigby"

We're all lonely to one degree or another, this side of eternity. If it were different, there'd be no longing. Or expectation. Even so, we're living in unusually lonely times.

Some call it a loneliness epidemic. Alice Aedy, a British filmmaker, calls it a dystopian time. "Almost Orwellian." Call it what you will, maybe, with some help from our friends, we can do something about it.

Aedy made her short film, "Disconnected," not long after the U.S. acquired the world's first (if you can imagine) minister for loneliness. The documentary gives voice to people simply leaving phone messages. They talk to nobody in particular, often desperately, about their loneliness. That's how much they want to be heard.

Some people need to be alone, to have space to reflect, or recharge, or just be themselves. We're around. "You're a high-functioning introvert," is what a friend once told me. It's a compliment, I think. So being alone can be quite fine.

Human disconnectedness, which is growing in western nations, is something different. The pandemic exacerbated it. But it's becoming

more systemic. The poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote, "water, water everywhere, with nothing to drink." Think, "people, people everywhere, with nobody to talk to."

Not really talk. Not with any intimacy. Not without fear. Or shame. Nobody to know and nobody to be known by. Nobody to meet those deep human needs going back to Eden, so much in our DNA.

The voices in Aedy's short documentary are anonymous voices, so they're honest. They're voices looking for catharsis. And connection. Over and over, this is what they say. They're experiencing crushing loneliness while surrounded by people. This is the strange truth of it.

Surveys show about one in 10 Canadians are often or always lonely. That's four million people.

And social media? "The fundamental promise of the internet — better connection — has failed." These are Aedy's words. This aligns with the research, that in the west, in rich countries like Canada, it's generation Z, our youth, so well-connected technologically, who are the most lonely.

John Cacioppo, a Chicago neuroscientist, was regarded as the world's leading "loneliness expert." He believed loneliness can even get into our cells and alter genes. And why can social media create such a profound estrangement and fake intimacy? "Because surrogates can never make up completely for the absence of the real thing."

So take a minute — 13 minutes and change, actually — to watch "Disconnected." It's conveniently, if not

paradoxically, online. It might break your heart like it did the filmmakers'. They listened to these lonely people, these voices, all night long, fighting tears, until this message came: "Your mailbox is full."

Then go and talk to (no, listen to) people. Really. With November now biting, with deeper darkness and upcoming holiday stressors, people will appreciate a warm "hello" more than you realize.

On my morning walk, a stranger recently talked to me about the death of his dog. Before that I listened to an artist in the nearby park explain aspects of his work and how, that day, he was shut out of the studio he normally uses. And, my natural disposition is not of Mister Bubby.

Anyone can do this. Anyone can slow down and anyone can take a minute. Don't worry people will think you're weird. Or a threat. While the odd person might rebuff your "hello," most welcome the friendliness. The surveys show this. Just show tact. And after saying hello to some stranger, rekindle some old friendship.

We especially need to give each other permission to be honest. Certainly young people — your children and mine — should be made to feel they can be vulnerable. Because when you live online, you're especially leery of expressing yourself for fear someone will come after you.

It's like you're not allowed to breathe.

And that's no way to live.
READ THOMAS FROESE AT THOMASFROESE.COM.

In Canada, sex work is a crime, not a job

DEBRA M. HAAK

Exchanging sex for money is illegal in Canada. This was confirmed by an Ontario court last month in a case commenced by the Canadian Alliance for Sex Work Law Reform and six individuals with experience in the commercial sex industry.

Justice Robert Goldstein of the Superior Court of Justice upheld as constitutional six criminal offences targeting the commercial exchange of sex between adults. This followed at least nine earlier decisions where courts across Canada considered whether criminal prostitution laws introduced by Stephen Harper's Conservative government in 2014 violated the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The Alberta Court of Appeal also recently upheld as constitutional two of those offences. The Ontario Court of Appeal found three of the offences constitutional last year. Two findings from these decisions are important. First, after almost a decade in force, Canada's criminal prostitution laws remain poorly understood. Second, the real issue for many who oppose those laws is not that the laws are unconstitutional; it is that sex work is treated as a crime and not a job.

Six criminal offences now target the commercial exchange of sex in Canada. The criminal offences enacted in 2014 target buying sex, materially benefiting from someone else's sale of sex, procuring or inducing someone to sell sex and ad-

vertising sex for sale. Additional criminal offences target communicating to sell sex in places where children are likely to be and impeding traffic while negotiating the purchase or sale of sex.

When Canada chose this new approach and enacted criminal laws to pursue it, it followed countries like Sweden, Norway and Iceland in recognizing the commercial exchange of sex as an inherently harmful activity. This "equality model" approach to prostitution recognizes the commercial exchange of sex occurs in a context of intersecting inequalities and is accompanied by a high risk of violence. This policy approach also recognizes there is a link between the commercial sex market and human trafficking. The goal is to reduce the number of people exposed to harm in and from the commercial sex market by reducing the size of that market.

In finding all six criminal offences constitutional last month, Goldstein pointed directly to misunderstandings about what the laws do — and do not — capture. Witnesses for the applicants provided evidence the laws prevented sex workers from taking safety measures that could increase their safety — like hiring bodyguards or working together. But the court found those measures were permitted through exceptions and through a legislated immunity from prosecution for those providing sexual services.

criminal offence. Those providing sex for payment are aiding, abetting or counselling that offence and so are parties to the offence. The only reason they are not prosecuted is because they are provided with immunity from prosecution — based in part on an understanding many sellers are vulnerable.

Which leads to the second important observation made by Goldstein. The real problem for those who oppose the current laws is not that the laws are unconstitutional; it is that the commercial exchange of sex is treated as a crime and not a job.

The applicants argued the challenged criminal provisions violated their rights by denying them sexual autonomy and increasing their risk of experiencing violence. Goldstein found the laws did not violate their rights because there is no Charter right to engage in sex work and because the safety-enhancing measures identified by the applicants as unlawful were, in fact, legally permitted.

More public education about the current policy approach to prostitution and the criminal laws enacted to pursue it would help correct misunderstanding of the laws. It would ensure Canadians know why exchanging sex for money is a crime.

It would also better ensure those who continue to provide sexual services for consideration in this unlawful context know what safety-enhancing measures they may legally take. But the real problem for many who oppose the laws is that sex work is treated as a crime and not a job. For that to change, Parliament needs to be convinced, not the courts.

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