

LETTERS

### These are actions of a dictator

On Wednesday we witnessed the mayor being a dictator, not a leader. Overruling council is not how a democracy is supposed to work.

The parking lot in question in Stoney Creek is important to residents. Many are elderly and being able to park close for medical appointments, the legion, shopping and church reduces their stress. Now that lot will often be full and there is little street parking available. Did the mayor consider that, with the development of a 155-unit residential building around the corner on King Street and the 67 proposed in the parking lot, parking will become a major issue?

The R.L. Hyslop property would have been a better choice. It is slated to be a park. That will make three in a four-block radius. That property is large enough to accommodate both housing and a park.

I wonder if the mayor will be surprised next election when she only gets votes from the new Stoney Creek residents. I had more hope for this mayor than she is currently deserving.

*Doug Friesen, Stoney Creek*

### Mayor right to use new powers

Affordable housing is a serious issue that has to be dealt with. All Hamilton councillors agree with this. Until it lands in their community and then they are influenced by potential loss of votes in future elections. At some point councillors need to have the courage to overlook their local responsibilities for the good of the larger goal, which is the urgent need for affordable housing in Hamilton. The case in question here is a plan for affordable housing on a municipal parking lot in downtown Stoney Creek that council has rejected. Rejected mainly due to local residents potentially losing 57 parking spots on a 162-spot lot. Mayor Andrea Horwath has decided to use “strong-mayor powers” to override councillors. I totally agree with her decision because without her pushing forward, this affordable housing crisis will ride the merry-go-round from ward to ward without anything getting done.

Winona’s Coun. Jeff Beattie has said he’s working on a made-in-Stoney Creek plan for affordable housing predicated on a “collaborative approach.” Huh? Any details? I think that is textbook political jargon designed to deflect or confuse, buying time until the issue lands on someone else’s doorstep.

Good on you, Mayor Horwath, for stepping up to the plate to actually take a step forward.

*Russ Urech, Caledonia*

### Do cars trump people here?

Parking spaces for vehicles versus housing for people? In Hamilton, vehicles trump people. Hopefully, city councillors were able to find spaces to park their vehicles before they walked past the tent encampment at city hall, on their way to the council meeting for the vote for affordable housing to be built on a city-owned parking lot in Stoney Creek. To the city councillors who voted against the motion, shame on all of you!

*Mary Elizabeth Toth, Ancaster*

### Following Ford’s orders

I see our invisible Mayor Andrea Horwath has finally done something since being elected. Premier Doug Ford must have given her marching orders last week and she followed through with a undemocratic decision to build in a parking lot that the constituents have made it quite clear they don’t want. Politicians forget they work for us. Ford gave her more power than she ever had in opposition at Queen’s Park. Why don’t they build on the parking lot behind city hall? This city has so many brownfields to build on.

*Harvey Velix, Hamilton*

### This is how bullies operate

First I would like to thank Coun. Matt Francis for fighting for something extremely important in his riding.

I am disappointed in the mayor’s decision to use the “strong-mayor powers.” It is a form of bullying. When one does not get their way they continue — as bullies do — to find a way to get what they want.

The vote was done twice. Both voted down building on that lot. That is how the democratic society works.

A thought: build on the parking lots on Ottawa Street. You could get two housing units on those lots.

*Teresa Corbett, Hamilton*

### Mayor is leading by example

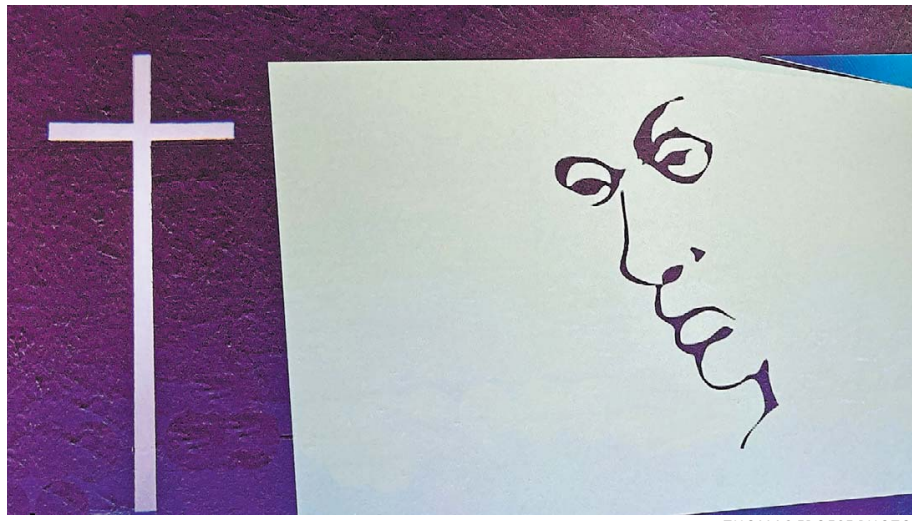
Thank you, Mayor Andrea Horwath, for doing the right thing regarding the parking lot in Stoney Creek! You are leading by example. I’m proud of the mayor using her veto power and showing us compassion and common sense.

*Robin Magder, Dundas*

### Where will the cars go?

I had to use the aforementioned parking lot recently in order to access the neighbouring medical building. It was packed at 10:30 on a Tuesday morning. I cannot imagine where all these cars would be if this lot was gone. The one main question is this: Why is this one lot in Stoney Creek being targeted when there are multiple lots in Hamilton?

*Al Dionisi, Stoney Creek*



THOMAS FROESE PHOTO

Writing about Easter and Pontius Pilate, contributor Thomas Froese refers to this image, an anamorphic one of a face. “It both shows and hides,” Froese writes. “And isn’t this life? We often miss what’s right in front of us.”

## We all have our doubts



THOMAS FROESE  
OPINION

Today, for Easter, it’s a good day to consider Pontius Pilate.

History tells us that 2,000 years ago, under Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate was Rome’s fifth governor in Judea, in ancient Israel, the Roman official who sent Christ to his crucifixion.

Somewhere nearby was Pilate’s wife who, after a troubling dream, reportedly warned her husband to stay clear of this Jewish peasant, this teacher, Jesus, the healing man who claimed that he was king of some kingdom, now in a kangaroo court facing trumped-up charges of blasphemy and sedition.

Pilate thought Jesus was innocent, but gave in to Christ’s enemies. Then, to ease his conscience, he washed his hands in public. This is the origin of the phrase “I’m washing my hands of this.”

Pilate is also known for asking Jesus what must be history’s finest question, “What is truth?”

There’s Pilate, I’m imagining, squinty-eyed, reaching for a drink, looking into Christ’s broken face, into mysteries he didn’t know, namely things larger than Rome’s empire or his own cynicism.

He couldn’t know about coming shock waves: Jerusalem’s earthquakes at Christ’s death or, later at his reported resurrection.

Then the aftershocks that would change people.

One wonders what gifts Pilate had left unused. What hopes were in his heart? What thoughts or fears held his private moments? Once I saw an illustration of a man’s face, a sort of Everyman, reflective, even sad. It could epitomize Pilate. It was in Germany, in a church. I took a photo. So it’s real, this image, this face on which things are written. More on this in a minute.

To be clear, Pilate is not alone. I, for one, identify with him. We all have our doubts. I’m named after history’s best-known doubter. Skepticism has its place. It helps ferret out truth. Further, my own view of truth — such an unfashionable and slippery word — is that it’s often found underground. You work to find it. Journalists worldwide can tell you. Some give their lives for it.

This is the truth about truth. Somehow it will always be precious to people. Yesterday. Today. Any day. It’s like a diamond that strikingly reflects light from its various angles. So move yourself around, like a photographer once told me, to get the best look and picture of what’s in front of you.

It’s underground, under pressure, where costly gems are created. Like the animals walking overground, going about their daily affairs, we may be unaware. But this doesn’t diminish any truth. Even a diamond that you might find at your feet, trampled in the dust, is still a diamond.

Some people will tell you otherwise. “Truth? Come on. It doesn’t exist. Not really. It’s just a construct, a power play, of people wanting to get power. Or keep it.” Pilate might tell you this. There’s nothing new under the sun. But these people are mistaken. Or liars.

Or was Jesus, maybe, the liar? Oxford don C.S. Lewis, a former atheist who later wrote extensively about God’s ways and love, said that it’s a good question when digging for Easter’s truth.

Known as Lewis’ Trilemma, his point is that one particular assumption about Jesus, that he was merely a good man, is perfect nonsense. Based on reliable first-hand accounts from Jesus’ time, he’d have to be, as he claimed, a divine king. Or completely crazy. Or, worse, a liar.

Now the sketch. The forlorn-looking man. It’s a face. But turn it counter-clockwise a quarter turn (go ahead) and, speaking of lies, find “liar” written. It’s an anamorphic image. It both shows and hides. And isn’t this life? We often miss what’s right in front of us.

Spring is now showing its own face. We feel its breath, fresh and warm and welcoming. Winter, like some ancient stone, has been rolled away so we can hear and see and touch and smell things, deep and beautiful things, truth included. Spring with Easter. It’s breaking through the earth as one. “Here I am,” it says. “I’m alive.”

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## Do Ontario ads cross the line?

ÉRIC BLAIS

In an era where the advertising industry faces unprecedented challenges, the infusion of significant government spending into advertising campaigns is not just welcome; it’s a lifeline.

A vivid example of this is the Ontario Government’s “It’s happening here” campaign, a venture injecting \$8 million into the ecosystem of ad agencies, production houses, media planners, buyers, and the media. For an industry yearning for the golden days of lucrative ad space and time sales, this campaign is nothing short of a godsend.

Yet, the campaign, while ostensibly a celebration of “Team Ontario” and its accomplishments, has stirred controversy. Is it a judicious use of public funds, or a veiled attempt at partisan promotion by the Ford government? I see it as the latter.

The background of this debate is rooted in the legal standards set by the Government Advertising Act, notably amended in 2016. The act allows government communication intended to promote Ontario as an ideal place to live, work, invest, study, or visit. Moreover, most Ontario government advertising must be vetted by the Office of the Auditor General to ensure it does not veer into partisanship. However, the definition of partisan is nuanced, tailored to exclude explicit political endorsements but allow-

ing for broad promotional messages about the province.

An advertisement is deemed partisan if it features the name, voice, or image of a member of the executive council or assembly. It’s also considered partisan if it includes a recognized party’s name or logo, directly criticizes a recognized party or assembly member, or significantly incorporates a colour associated with the governing party. Recall how Kathleen Wynne’s government faced accusations of favouring red autumn leaves and bricks in ads promoting government programs.

The Progressive Conservatives once criticized the 2016 reforms, promising a return to stringent controls. Yet, such promises remain unfulfilled, as evident in the auditor general’s 2023 report, which tagged \$25 million of government ad spending as partisan.

Critics, including NDP Leader Marit Stiles, decry the spending on the “It’s happening here” initiative as wasteful, arguing that it serves more to embellish the government’s image than to provide genuinely useful information to the public. The hefty sum allocated to these ads underscores the perceived disconnect between government priorities and public interest.

In defending the campaign, Doug Ford’s administration emphasizes its intent to bolster provincial pride and economic confidence amid global uncertainty. However, this

defence does not fully address the crux of the criticism: the thin line between promoting the province and promoting the party in power.

Professionals in advertising and marketing recognize the value and power of well-crafted campaigns to shape perceptions and drive narratives. Yet, the ethical dimensions of government-funded advertising call for a delicate balance.

Is it necessary to spend this much, including on airtime during the Grammy Awards, to foster pride and confidence? Proud of a place where “It’s all happening?” And the revelation that we already live in that place?

This campaign is running all across Ontario in newspapers, online, and on other media platforms. On Feb. 15, the same large space ad about jobs (700,000 more people are working today than in 2018 — when the Ontario PCs came to power) appeared in papers across the province, from the North Bay Nugget to The Chatham Daily News.

It’s noteworthy how the folks living in the Windsor area were served a different ad, one telling them that they already live in a place where there will soon be one of the first two electric vehicle battery plants in the country.

Is it information the local population needs to know? Or a geo-targeted feel-good ad they will likely recall during the next provincial election?

As the ad legend David Ogilvy once said: “The customer is not a moron. She’s your wife.” And she can tell when taxpayer funds are being used for government advertising selling her a political brand.

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