

LETTERS

Help or get out of the way

Re: Sparks fly at Hamilton council over lobbying report, Sept. 12

The affordable housing crisis is the biggest, costliest challenge faced by the city. For people living on the street, it is literally an existential problem. For taxpayers, endless temporary solutions are unsustainable. With corporate entities buying rental units across the province, I expect the affordable housing problem will worsen with time. Indwell, and the community partners who are trying to get affordable housing built, are not the enemy. They are an important part of the solution. To those who aren't prepared to make hard decisions and do the hard work needed to get affordable housing built, at least get out of the way.

Bonnie McInnes, Hamilton

Kudos to Coun. Matt Francis

A round of applause must be given to Ward 5 Coun. Matt Francis, by not just Ward 5 residents, but Hamiltonians all around. He has taken the charge in standing up for the democratic rights of Hamiltonians. The people of Ward 5 have made their voice heard loud and clear on the issue at hand and in true democratic fashion, the council vote supported constituents. However, in true dictatorial fashion, Mayor Andrea Horwath imposed her will and political ambitions to override the vote. Francis' actions put him in the hot seat, but he is doing what many of the councillors are failing to do, which is to call out the political ambitions and motivations of Mayor Horwath and other councillors, and to stand up for the residents who elected them. I am proud of my councillor and hope that more elected officials at all levels will share his fortitude and dedication to constituents.

Derek Taylor, Hamilton

New dress code fails students

Re: New HWDSB student dress code covers more issues than skin, Sept. 9

What a shameful excuse for a "policy document." The allowable attire described would be more suitable for a tattoo parlour or a carnival clown car than a place for learning. The fluff and babble presented in the rationale are just another indicator of the nonsense our "progressive" system and its disciples promote. Here is yet another example of how a once-fine school system has been decimated to appease progressive/activist ideology. Parents with the means will increasingly send their kids to private or Catholic schools, the public system will continue to flounder and erode, and the real losers will again be the many, many good kids who want nothing more than a safe, solid education, taught and administered by competent, caring adults, and delivered in an environment not resembling a Ringling Brothers tent. No doubt in next year's revisions "butts, groins, and nipples" will make the cut and all will be well.

Henry Bokar, Burlington

Ticats visits always appreciated

We had a really delightful visit from Ticat receiver Tim White on Tuesday at Cathedral High School where I coach football. He did not stay for a nominal few minutes but stayed with us for the entire practice — running drills, coaching quarterbacks, receivers, etc. and offering life lessons to our fine young men. After two hours of practice, he and Ticat staff stayed for more conversation and photographs. This is not the first time Ticat players have visited our schools as part of the Ticat high school mentorship program. The visits are always informative, professional and helpful to students and coaches.

Claudio D'Amato, Cathedral High School

Parents need to step up

Re: Fall fair organizers are stepping up safety measures amid recent violence, Sept. 12

I hope the OPP have a plan for protecting the people of Binbrook, especially with the fair now on. Most teens I have known are good people and are respectful of their neighbours and the law. That's not always so in Binbrook where some have been threatening, trespassing and vandalizing properties. You shouldn't have to be nervous in your own house. Parents, I hope you know what your children are doing and stop this before more serious things happen. Hoping for a safe weekend in Binbrook.

Nancy Roloson, Binbrook

'Free' transit isn't really free

Re: Free transit in Burlington could be a game changer, Sept. 10

I enjoyed reading a recent article extolling the consumer benefits of free transportation. Geez, who wouldn't want something for "free"? But the problem is there is nothing "free" about free transportation. The unionized staff still need to be paid their pension, benefits and salaries. The buses still require funds for operations and maintenance. I'm curious as to who would actually be footing the bill to provide Hamiltonians with this "free" transportation? And please let's not fall back on homeowners via property taxes.

Blanche Baldwin, Hamilton

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This circa 1950 photo from an old family album reminds Thomas Froese of his lifelong joy of riding.

COURTESY OF THOMAS FROESE

Get off your cell and onto a bike



THOMAS FROESE
OPINION

Today let's talk about motorcycles. And the children in the nearby schoolyard. The ones who run and jump and scream and laugh and do what children do. I hear them when I open the front door. School is back.

I wish they all had motorcycles, or at least a long ride on the back of a bike along some winding road with nothing around but the rushing air on their face. Give up the phones. Get motorcycles.

They'd be like Chris, the 11-year-old in "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance." The classic book translated into 27 languages turned 50 this year.

Funny enough, Robert Pirsig's fictitious autobiography isn't really about Zen Buddhism or maintaining motorcycles. It's about maintaining life. It's like a signpost showing when we opt for roads less taken, surprises will come. For one, we might know ourselves better.

Chris rides on back of his father's motorcycle for 17 days during a road trip to the Pacific Ocean. Along the way the book explores various things including mental illness and the ways of the head and the heart. The unnamed narrator wrestles

with his past, an uneasy time in academia.

Then there's our relationship with technology and making peace with all that. How we handle new technology. Or not. How we fear it. Or not.

It was a concern in 1974. Like now. As it was in, say, 1894 when Hildebrand and Wolfmüller, in Germany, became the world's first mass producers of motorcycles.

But about motorcycles. They don't always get a fair shake. The children's mother, and the mothers of many children, would disagree. Statistics of injury and death come with these machines and I don't dispute that. I once had a hospital visit with a stepcousin who's never been the same since an absent-minded driver hit him on his motorcycle.

My own experience, though, is that at 19 I had a fire-red, economical Honda XL250. My heartthrob. Many mornings I'd secretly sneak it from the garage before dawn to enjoy sunrises on quieter roads in Niagara. I'd explore what Pirsig calls "a kind of nowhere, famous for nothing at all and having an appeal because of just that."

Prior, in boyhood, my bedroom had posters of mini-bikes while I envied someone like Randy Reece, a middle-school chum who knew the pleasure of taking his Yamaha YZ80 into pastoral woods and fields. Even now in a confined car,

when driving I often take backroads. It's nourishing.

Much of this crosses generations. Just sitting on the back of a bike, without control — so difficult, yet common in life — is daring at any age.

And consider an old family album. There's my father with his motorcycle in postwar Germany. Then there's this other photo, a woman riding a boy on back showing a grin as noticeable as his wild goggles. The two are unknown to me, unidentified riders from old Europe.

The boy could be like Pirsig's boy, Chris. Or like the running, laughing children at the nearby school. Which is to say that we all need to explore and risk in life. Or we'll calcify and die inside. As Pirsig once said, "The real motorcycle you're working on is yourself." By the way, 121 publishers rejected "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance" before one printed it. More than five million copies have since sold. Just saying. Want risk? Write a book.

Of course, every generation has its fears. And courage.

Further, it seems to me that the enemy of anything that's half-right in this world isn't evil as we commonly think of it. Rather, it's apathy. Indifference. That shrug of the shoulder. The big meh. It's the crazy distractions.

No, our problem isn't that we don't have anything to live for. It's that we don't have anything to die for. That's nothing that a good motorcycle ride of one type or another won't cure.

There's a useful thought for anyone's school days.

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

We all need to be part of the solution

ANDREA HORWATH

Real change comes from leadership.

We all know homelessness and affordable housing are the most pressing issues our city is facing this crisis has been building for years. Addressing it requires leadership that we have not experienced before.

When it comes to the growing number of people who are unhoused in Hamilton, there is no doubt that we are on a difficult journey as a city, not unlike many communities across the province and country. A long-term solution is not going to happen overnight and requires advocating to various levels of government alongside all municipal leaders.

As mayor, I continue to do this. While that work is ongoing, the fact remains we need interim solutions that can be implemented immediately.

This is why I continue to take the lead, recently issuing a mayoral directive instructing staff to work with all City of Hamilton departments, Hamilton Police Services, and business and community partners to develop a solution that bridges the gap in a co-ordinated effort focused on real outcomes.

As a result of my directive, City of Hamilton staff will present a comprehensive plan, developed with community partners, that provides specific recommendations which can be operationalized immediately. These tangible recommenda-

tions will come before the general issues committee of council on Sept. 18.

Let me be clear, issuing this mayoral directive was a prudent and necessary step, and I will continue to show leadership on the most pressing issues facing our city, even in the most difficult of times. It is the right thing to do.

I recognize the impact this crisis is having on all Hamiltonians — including our business community and those who are fortunate enough to have a roof over their heads.

No one wants to fear for their safety, the safety of their family, belongings or property.

In the very same breath, I will say that no one wants to be homeless, or to be without the mental and physical supports required to live with dignity, unsure of where their next meal will come from, their next hot shower, or their next decent night's sleep.

The current encampment protocol approved by council more than a year ago was put in place to provide city staff and community partners and unhoused folks with direction and guidance; it was never intended to solve homelessness, but rather to manage the need to share public spaces respectful of the needs of all, while we work on better solutions.

It was the first step. My mayoral directive is the next step, transitioning people to a place where they can receive wrap-around services and temporary

outdoor shelter to bridge the gap to more permanent housing solutions.

These temporary outdoor wrap-around service site(s) are meant to provide supports and shelter to those who are currently unable to utilize our existing shelter system, including couples and those with pets.

It's important to note this is not the only work being done.

As part of my leadership in creating the Housing Sustainability and Investment Roadmap, establishing Hamilton's Housing Secretariat, and in partnership with so many local housing providers along the entire housing continuum, we have identified approximately 1,400 units of affordable housing projects — shovel ready — with more in the process of being approved, for municipal contribution.

For the first time, the City of Hamilton is all in. We are at the table intentionally, purposefully, bringing all the support we can, whether it be through funding, exemptions, or land. The partnership of the other orders of government will make these units a reality.

As mayor I have a job to do, which I take very seriously. I will not let muckraking and political posturing stand in the way.

I beseech my council colleagues and community leaders to not be distracted. It is imperative we work together to solve the crisis that is impacting our entire city, to support the most vulnerable among us, in line with our core values as a compassionate community, and in so-doing set Hamilton up for success for all, now and for the many generations ahead.

Let's all rise to this historic but difficult moment and be part of the solution.

ANDREA HORWATH IS THE MAYOR OF HAMILTON.