

# Elon Musk will get the job done

GORAN CALIC

If we could strip away the flamboyant personal style and the sharply partisan politics at play, it would be much easier to see Elon Musk is the right choice to lead America's drive for greater efficiency in government.

There are many arguments one could make against the appropriateness of Elon Musk joining entrepreneur-politician Vivek Ramaswamy in leading the nascent Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE.

But if we suspend the question of whether Musk should be doing this work and concentrate on whether he can do this work, the answer is unequivocal: yes.

One may quibble with the mandate itself and how far the drive for efficiency in government ought to go — including whether there should be such a drive at all — but when the subject comes to cutting waste, Musk is the best available choice.

He has a talent for understanding organizations, how they operate and how they can meet their mandates while spending much, much less.

Some may be concerned Musk's well-established skills in private business are not necessarily transferable to the do-



ANNA MONEYMAKER GETTY IMAGES FILE PHOTO

When it comes to cutting waste, Elon Musk is the best available choice, Goran Calic argues.

main of government, but that's a red herring. Both business and government are about organizing groups of people toward a shared goal.

Business schools like the one where I teach, the DeGroote School of Business at McMaster University, and the one where I am visiting, the Harvard Business School, are not just business schools — they are schools of organizational science.

Wherever humans do something together, whether that's making dinner, playing football, doing business or governing, they are organizing toward a shared goal. To accomplish that goal, they care about only two things: effectiveness and effi-

ciency. While those concepts are closely related, they are not the same.

Effectiveness is an organization's ability to meet its shared goal. It answers the question: Are we doing the right things?

Efficiency is the careful use of finite resources — time, money, materials, people — to bring about that shared goal. It answers the question: Are we doing things right?

Doing things right is critical for all organizations because the pool of resources available to accomplish a shared goal is always limited.

If it weren't, there'd be no use for economics, there'd be no use for business and there would be no use for setting priorities and

making good decisions.

When we think about the DOGE and Musk's role in it, we should evaluate the need for this department not by whether we believe in a specific government program or not, but by whether we believe that government program is efficient — while also keeping in mind that a program that is not efficient may not be effective. And that is the standard the DOGE should meet. In that space, Musk is made for the job.

Let's look at Musk's organizational skills at Tesla Inc.

One could make a really strong argument against electric cars: they cause too much harm because making them requires a lot of carbon-intensive mineral mining. And though they don't use gas, they use a lot of electricity, which can be problematic.

These are questions of effectiveness.

Is Musk's Tesla making them efficiently?

Tesla is making impressive progress in that regard, becoming one of the world's most valuable companies by using vertical integration by, for instance, cutting out wasteful layers in the sales process by selling cars directly to customers.

The easier demonstration of Musk's master of efficiency is his company SpaceX, because

the numbers are so stunning and because it is doing what government once did, but much more efficiently.

Musk has positioned the company into place as a preferred aerospace contractor for the U.S. government, providing the same services as the space shuttle both more reliably and at a sharply lower cost.

Delivering cargo to the International Space Station and other near-space destinations on NASA's now-retired space shuttle used to cost \$55,000 (all figures U.S.) per kilogram.

As a concrete example, sending a typical orange to an astronaut on the International Space Station using the government-built space shuttle would have cost about \$10,900.

SpaceX brought down the cost of sending that same orange by an incredible 95 per cent, to \$540, using the Falcon 9 rocket.

With its Starship technology set to come on stream, that cost could soon be as low as \$40, a reduction of 99.7 per cent from what the same job cost a little more than a decade ago.

In any domain, that would be a stunning feat of efficiency. Whether we should be sending oranges into space is an altogether different question.

If we believe the government is already efficient, clearly there is no need for DOGE.

If we don't believe it is, there are few better choices to lead it.

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ALFRED DEBUS PHOTO

"Even alongside Christmas' secular celebration, the historic Christmas narrative is so enduring," Thomas Froese writes.

## It's good to remember where we come from



THOMAS FROESE  
OPINION

I have a photo of a Christmas family gathering more than 50 years old. I'm there, at the table, the quiet-looking white-haired boy.

The young lady on the right, with the round eyes and beaming smile, is my cousin, Margo. Her brother, Gerry, is the enchanting young gentleman behind her. In the middle, looking substantial, is my father. My sister, Heidi, always a favourite German name, is to my left. Our mother, who went into eternity around this time, is absent.

To my right is my father's sister, Ruth. With her husband, who photographed this scene, she opened her Kitchener home to me during a couple of seasons, including when I studied journalism. Tante Ruth, who's now 95, helped steer me toward newspapers. So if you've ever enjoyed this space, thank her.

I have other Christmas memories. Some include, naturally, receiving gifts, and hugs, when I'd maybe smell my father's cologne, so earthy. Yes, Christmas is for the world's children.

Yet heartache, even scandal, can also be in family Christmases. Not that scandals can't come any time. They can. Some families have wild skeletons in the closet. Most families know at least garden-variety scandal, the sort that still causes people to duck like hens.

It's something for the holidays. Because before the story of young Jesus gets rolling, before we read anything about Mary or Joseph or other players in the Christmas narrative that's been entrusted to us through the centuries, this is what we get: scandal.

It's between the lines, but still like laundry blowing in the breeze, this in the otherwise dry opening of Matthew's gospel. Matthew starts his reporting with this Jesus' family tree.

The papers would have had a jolly time with it, linking names like Tamar and Rahab and King David — some of Jesus' ancestral relatives — with scandals including family seduction, prostitution, and murder to hide adultery.

Then there's the scandal leading to Jesus' mysterious birth in Bethlehem, in ancient Israel. All those whispers and sideways glances directed toward, for one, young Mary, the virgin, unmarried, yet somehow pregnant.

Which is to say that the world can be a place that's ugly, and dark, if not just plain dysfunctional.

My cousins Gerry and Margo, by the way, have different birth mothers. They were adopted, separately, then loved and mothered by my Tante Ruth. Also, my own family includes our adopted daughter. It comes to mind because, in a way, adoption is also part of this.

This is what, later, Jesus taught. The kingdom of heaven is filled with those who, like children, live with wonder and trust. Because when you're a child waiting for adoption, you

don't say, "Pick me. I'll pay for my food. And clothes. Schooling too." Such false self-sufficiency just defeats the relationship.

Which leads to another note on the scandal of Jesus. Teaching about God's kingdom, he talked freely about his power to forgive sins.

He also had power to heal people. But Jesus otherwise rejected power as we commonly understand it. Further, he said we'd be surprised to see some characters, and others not, at his kingdom's table.

So it's good to remember where we come from. Our humanness. Our childlike needs.

Because there is that darkness into the world to bring peace, even wellness, in the midst of one darkness or another, to redeem persons, and families, indeed to redeem the human family.

This is why, even alongside Christmas' secular celebration, the historic Christmas narrative is so enduring. It has this un sentimentalism.

It's why people are singing this season about "Emmanuel," which means, "God with us." It's why they're singing about this great light in the darkness, why they're singing with joy.

"Don't be afraid. I'm here. I'm with you." This is what the God of Christmas says.

It's a good news message for you and your family, whoever your family may be this holiday season. And it's a hopeful message for a weary world.

FIND THOMAS FROESE AT THOMASFROESE.COM AND THOMASFROESE.SUBSTACK.COM.

### LETTERS

#### Time to hit the pause button

Christmas has steadily slipped from a religious to a mainly secular celebration — from the birth of Christ to Santa Claus and consumerism. Along the way, it has been commercialized into a stressful frenzy of modern day buying and credit card debt. Hitting the pause button on the shopping madness may give us time to reflect on the origins of Christmas, catch our breath from all of the busyness and to enjoy more time with family and friends.

The gifts to Jesus from the Three Wise Men represented love, truth and service, something we could all use a little more of in this troubled world. These are gifts that cost nothing, that we can give to our fellow travellers, at Christmas and throughout the year.

Wayne Poole, Dundas

#### How to make Christmas bright

This Christmas, mend a quarrel. Seek out a forgotten friend. Dismiss suspicion and replace it with trust.

Write a letter. Give a soft answer. Encourage youth. Manifest your loyalty in word and deed. Keep a promise. Forgo a grudge. Forgive an enemy. Apologize. Try to understand. Examine your demands on others. Think first of someone else. Be kind. Be gentle. Laugh a little more. Express your gratitude. Welcome a stranger. Gladden the heart of a child. Take pleasure in the beauty and wonder of the earth. Speak your love, and then speak it again.

Ross Prince, Hamilton

#### Keep local medical services

I don't know much about the services offered at East Region Mental Health Services (ERMHS) and have never needed the services myself. However, if I ever did, having one close by would be most beneficial.

I find decisions made in boardrooms without actually hearing from those who rely on the services is so typical of organizations who only look

at spreadsheets for their decisions, and not at the lived experiences of the people who need the services.

The further one has to travel to attend a medical appointment, the less likely it will be that the person will go. This is especially true if the person must travel great distance by public transit. What will happen with the current patients of the ERMHS is their care will lapse as they find it more burdensome to make the trek to the West 5th campus (two buses minimum from Stoney Creek). This is not good news for anyone.

I hope St Joe's changes its mind and considers improving on the services it offers there and allows those in East Hamilton to receive their treatment where they are most familiar and comfortable. Listen to your staff and your patients. You can't put a price on community care.

Erin Shacklette, Hamilton

#### Spec carriers appreciated

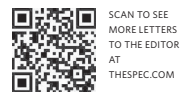
Re: The 'paper girl' who delivers holiday cheer every morning, Dec. 21

During this time I want to take this opportunity to thank the all the Spector's carriers who bring our papers. We seldom see our carriers as they deliver our papers at the crack of dawn, but I wanted them to know they are appreciated.

Special thanks to our carriers, Estelle and Richard — they are the most dependable, friendly and conscientious people. We always have a paper. Even when we don't expect a paper due to weather they, somehow, manage to deliver our Spec.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all the hard working carriers out there.

Diana MacKenzie, Hamilton



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