

A22 | COMMENT

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2025 THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR
SUBMISSIONS WELCOME: 660-WORD MAXIMUM, FULL NAME REQUIRED. SEND TO OPINIONS@THESPEC.COM

We have plenty of reasons to be thankful

LAURA BABCOCK

I'm thankful to live in a country where cities and provinces are known for their unique history, culture, culinary treats, arts and topography, not for their red or blue status or whether the military should invade them.

It sounds insane, but that is what's happening in America, where the national guard is being federalized and ordered to crack down on Chicago, Portland, Memphis, Los Angeles, and even their capital, Washington, D.C., and Trump is threatening to invoke the Insurrection Act on his own people.

I'm thankful to live in a country where, despite our many challenges, to create a better economy for youth, build enough affordable housing for all, fix our immigration system, figure out common sense gun laws and crime mitigation strategies, we do it through dialogue, not burning down houses of political leaders or assassinations. It sounds insane, but that is what's happening in America, where a governor's home was set on fire, politicians have been assassinated at their doorstep, and a controversial activist was shot.

I'm thankful to live in a country where the rule of law remains intact and changes to our bail system, legal system or notwithstanding clause are debated in Parliament and challenged in court, with decisions being adhered to, not ignored or circumvented. It sounds insane, but that is what's happening in America, where illegal flights take off in the night to send people to countries they've never lived, boats are blown out of the water without evidence of criminality, and due process is ignored by masked men pointing guns at unarmed protesters, even shooting pepper balls at the head of a clergyman.

I'm thankful to live in a country where when we are attacked through an unjust trade war and continual threats to our sovereignty by our mercurial neighbour we don't splinter into radical factions of the left or right and normalize cruelty and division, we come together and change our spending and travel habits in a sustained "Elbows Up" boycott that has gained Canada respect the world over.

I'm thankful to live in a country where we can recognize that the fight for freedom from an invading tyrant is also our fight, so we consistently send resources to Ukraine to help their brave people protect their democracy and all of Western society against autocracy, instead of haranguing their leader, cutting off aid and applauding the invader on a red carpet. It sounds insane, but that is what's happening in America, where the Trump regime has tried to intimidate Volodymyr Zelenskyy, used delay tactics and discontinued funding to Ukraine, enabling Vladimir Putin to keep slaughtering civilians and take thousands of children.

I'm thankful to live in a country with the highest education rates in the G7, where we value science and follow science — from vaccination to food safety, climate change mitigation, to protecting civil servants — rather than engaging in cruel and chaotic mass layoffs, harmful shutdowns and giving dangerous health advice to pregnant women. It sounds insane, but that's what's happening in America, where DOGE cut the federal workforce indiscriminately, measles outbreaks are killing children, top scientists are being fired, research is ending, and people are encouraged to stop believing in facts and evidence.

I'm thankful to live in a country where 44,000 of us can watch the Boys of Summer, the Toronto Blue Jays, play a ball game in a stadium without fear of masked immigration agents waiting to disappear people at the gates. It sounds insane, but that is what's happening in America, where ICE agents have waited outside stadiums and the government has even threatened to do that at the upcoming Super Bowl.

Canada faces numerous challenges and has significant work to do to become the resilient nation that the next century of global leadership demands. While some premiers and politicians copy American MAGA-style politics with anti-science rhetoric, false narratives about rampant crime and persecution, promote regressive social policies, mass deportations, ending birthright citizenship and do tours to stoke culture wars, we have a dignified prime minister working to unite Canada's economy and work diplomatically with all of our trading partners.

This Thanksgiving, I'm most thankful that a majority of Canadians are speaking out in our public square and, despite our differences, working together peacefully to remain true north, strong, and free.

LAURA BABCOCK IS PRESIDENT OF POWERGROUP COMMUNICATIONS AND THE HOST OF "THE OSHOW."



I'm thankful to be able to attend a game without fear of masked immigration agents waiting to disappear people at the stadium gates, Laura Babcock writes.

GETTY IMAGES



THOMAS FROESE

The view from Princess Point from chairs placed by Parks Canada. Thomas Froese writes how it's a place to give thanks while also having "Forrest Gump" interactions with random people.

Finding meaning in the harshness of life



THOMAS FROESE
OPINION

Thanksgiving is a good time to be reminded that some of our coolest connections can be with random people ignored or circumvented.

I had one recently during an unplanned walk at Princess Point. That's where I met Michael.

I'd stopped to sit in one of those red Muskoka chairs placed by Parks Canada. Several hundred are placed in twos, side-by-side, across our nation in places with a view. It's where this "Forrest Gump" moment unfolded.

You know Forrest Gump from the movie of that name, how Forrest sits at a park bench and enthusiastically tells his life story to whoever stops by. Life, he says, is like a box of chocolates because you never know what's next.

At Princess Point a couple of young ladies first came by, then a middle-aged couple, then a mom with two kids — I took their photo for them — there in the warm air, the sun nearby. Then a man who looked like his life was one long toothache came by. This is Michael.

He took time to get his rucksack off his back, gather himself and stand half-straight while in conversation with himself. Then he slowly took out a large spiralled notebook.

It looked weathered, like it might have seen the rain or a puddle, with simple handwriting on its pages.

"Are you a writer?" I asked. Michael said he was. The notebook was his journal for his son, a young teen he hadn't seen for some time. His son was everything. Eventually, sluggishly, Michael talked about his life. Lost work. Lost relationships. It seemed this man had lost himself.

Before going further let me say that it's hard to argue with life being like a box of chocolates. But maybe it's also like an alphabet of grace, one with no vowels, this so we can fill those spaces with our personal experiences and rhythms and sounds and faith and imagination — it was Einstein who said imagination is more important than knowledge — all to find meaning.

I'd read something like this before meeting Michael. And despite all his lostness, this, it seems, is what Michael was doing with that shabby journal for his son: finding meaning in the harshness and mystery of life.

We often think of what we can do for people like Michael. The addicted. The homeless. The bewildered. And thank God we do. People who work with the Michaels of the world, who speak for them, who lighten their loads, who give them a measure of healing, are people to especially thank on this weekend of expressed gratitude.

But when you stop to listen to the

story of some stranger, you also receive. Not because your life might be easier than your neighbour's (but for the grace of God go I) but because you're reminded that you're alive, able to get up and put on your pants and shoes and get out into the day to learn that you're not the centre of the universe.

You're reminded you're in community, in communion, all of us lost and found, both, in this world, so messy, together, not unlike treasures in jars of clay, earthen jars that are cracked so your inner light is seen by others. This is the truth of it. We're a bunch of crackpots.

So, after listening to Michael, I stood, then after asking, hugged him. Our eyes met briefly. And the moment was somehow beautiful and brave and sad and funny all at once.

On the drive home I passed some kids playing ball. I thought of mine, the eldest downtown and starting her nursing career, the boy in aerospace studies in Ottawa, the younger girl a McMaster student living at home.

But it's the journal that I'm still thinking about. Maybe I will for a while. That old notebook with those hopeless and hope-filled letters has to get into the hands of that boy. With any luck it will. This too will be a moment of thanksgiving.

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

LETTERS

Cut city hall payroll

Re: Horwath looks to cap tax increase at 4.25 per cent in 2026, Oct. 7

Here we go again with our mayor asking her staff to keep the taxes at 4.2 per cent without service cuts. We have been down this road before. The hard decision has to be made to cut the city payroll and clear out the departments that are not performing. We have had numerous lawsuits and budget issues involving certain departments and nothing happens.

We as taxpayers are not money trees. There's no leaves left. The waste of taxpayers' money in this city is disgraceful.

Peter Colley, Hamilton

Build shelters before winter

Re: Andrea Horwath highlights accomplishments at mayor's breakfast, but says 'work is not done', Oct. 9

I found our mayor's address to the chamber of commerce very interesting. She highlighted her success and said that there is more to be done.

The city evicted homeless people from the parks and trails. Only a few (I think it was around 70) received a little house. There are 2,000 homeless in our city. Where are the others supposed to go? They are creeping into our neighbourhoods! This is causing a safety issue as many of these

individuals are mentally unstable and not in control of their behaviours.

Perhaps we should pay construction workers to quickly build homes before the cold of winter for the remainder of the homeless. This would certainly address public safety and homelessness.

Perhaps if Andrea Horwath and her fellow colleagues had fixed the vulnerable computers of the city prior to the hacking we would have the money to house the homeless.

Perhaps if the city had paid a reasonable amount for the existing mini-homes, there would even be an excess.

Dollars are not being stretched, they are wasted by the city.

Suki Garson, Dundas

City needs police ally, not activist

Re: Coun. Mike Spadafora to join Hamilton Police Services Board, Oct. 9

It is refreshing that Coun. Mike Spadafora took a seat on the Hamilton Police Services Board. The city needs a law enforcement ally to voice crime and safety concerns, not another so-called activist bent on defunding and interference.

Kojo Damptey's commentary decrying Mayor Andrea Horwath stepping down (Oct. 4) all makes sense now. Losing once again to his nemesis must be a bitter bone to chew.

Wray Brown, Dundas

Church could loosen purse strings

Re: Pope Leo condemns economies that marginalize the poor while the wealthy live in a bubble of luxury, Oct. 9

Pope Leo criticized how the wealthy live in a "bubble of comfort and luxury" while poor people suffer on the margins. I find this rather rich coming from the leader of an organization worth up to \$73 billion.

Doak MacPherson, Brantford

Trump isn't the only bully

Watching events unfold over the past few days with Mark Carney visiting Washington and listening to Doug Ford spout off about standing up to a bully, and now, Bill 83 being pushed through the legislature.

Is this not "the pot calling the kettle black?" We need to stand up to our bully right here in Ontario. Speed cameras, underfunding of our education system, demolishing wetlands, building highways that fit into Doug's agenda and the list goes on. Who's the bully?

Catherine Castellano, Hannon

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