

LETTERS

Pothole story strikes a nerve

Re: Vehicle damaged by a pothole? No guarantee City of Hamilton will pay, March 12

The article regarding the city's unwillingness to pay for pothole damage sure struck a nerve. My wife hit a pothole last May while merging onto the westbound Line near Mohawk at 80 km/h and blew her right front tire. Thankfully, she was able to safely get off the road and call a tow truck. I filed a claim with the city to cover the \$300 cost for a new tire, to no avail. I even pushed it up the chain for review, and was told time and again that the city had maintained "minimum standards."

Shortly after the incident, the Line was closed for an entire weekend for yearly maintenance. Was the hole filled? Nope. In fact, it was not filled for another four to five weeks. Even the guy at city hall acknowledged another claim for the exact same pothole. (The tow truck driver had said he had responded a couple of days previous for another blowout in the same spot.) We have more potholes and worse roads than some developing countries. I suggest the city take a long look at its standards and consider upping its game.

Barry Gray, Hamilton

Don't bother filing a claim

Save your time filing a claim. Our vehicle sustained \$1,500 damage and the city denied the claim. It took eight months to get that reply. Its reason: the road in question was acceptable as per its guidelines. Yet there was a crew there the next day after we called to repair the road.

Guy McPhee, Hamilton

Maybe try slowing down

I saw the article in the March 12 paper as to people having pothole damage multiple times to their vehicles. I have been in this area for 18 years, most of that time with two cars, and have never experienced such damage. I wonder if driving aggressively may be the cause of much of the damage caused by potholes.

John Darling, Stoney Creek

Hallway medicine remains

We have heard about and experienced a lot of hallway medicine in the emergency departments of our hospitals. However, after a visit to a medical ward at the Juravinski Hospital, it is extremely clear the health crisis goes far deeper than the emergency wards. In one short ward hallway, I saw three patients in beds with privacy screens who obviously do not have a room. This is shocking and totally unacceptable. Premier Doug Ford needs to address this crisis instead of wasting millions on unnecessary ads praising himself.

Tina Travale, Hamilton

Make your voice heard this fall

Judging by the letters to the editor, podcasts and conversations, it would appear the majority of Hamiltonians don't want an LRT, the two-way street conversion on Main Street and other million-dollar bondodges being hoisted on us by the current group at city hall. Stuff like deteriorating infrastructure, horrible potholed roads, unusable public spaces, gun crime, out-of-control spending and tax increases are major issues that do concern us citizens but don't seem to resonate with the mayor and company. Well, there's a solution. There is an election coming and my advice is to vote this group into the dustbin of history and get some new blood and real change in play at city hall.

Paul E. Casey, Ancaster

Isn't this a job for the police?

Close the Main Branch of the Hamilton Library? Limit the hours the library is open? Show a library card to enter the building? All are suggestions based on the need for public safety at a public institution. Surely with the budget increases the Hamilton Police Service gets yearly it could spare a few officers to enforce the law and keep our citizens safe and the library open full hours. The police department is housed just down the street on King William Street.

Tim Geoghegan, Stoney Creek

Fiddling while province burns

Re: Hamilton shatters record with 199 overdose calls in 28 days, March 11

The city has set a bleak new record: 199 overdose calls in 28 days, compounded by a toxic drug supply making resuscitation longer and more difficult, all against the backdrop of Premier Doug Ford's shutdown of supervised consumption sites. Those on the front lines also identify worsening wealth and income inequality, lack of secure housing, and untreated mental health as additional contributing factors. Meanwhile, Ford continues to fiddle while the province burns, announcing a provincial takeover of Billy Bishop Airport, expansion of its runway and payment of unquantified financial "compensation" to the City of Toronto. It's inescapably clear Ford has no interest or intention to take any steps to address the real issues that beset the province and its people.

Dayna Firth, Hamilton

LETTERS WELCOME. 250-WORD MAXIMUM, FULL NAME REQUIRED. PREFERENCE MAY GO TO SHORTER LETTERS, AND ALL LETTERS ARE SUBJECT TO EDITING. SEND TO LETTERS@THESPEC.COM



Jessie Buckley and Paul Mescal in a scene from "Hamnet." Watching it, as a man, I've never thought more sincerely on matters of birthing or mothering a child. Or losing one, Thomas Froese writes.

An exploration of love and loss



THOMAS FROESE
OPINION

Before Sunday's Academy Awards, here's a family story.

He was 18 and she was 26 and pregnant, so they had a so-called shotgun wedding to save face, his and hers and the parents and the face of the family dog for all we know.

Despite the odds, the marriage of Bill and Anne then lasted until death parted them. April 23, strangely enough, was Bill's birthday and death day, both. He died at 52, just one month after signing his will where he noted his "perfect health."

Bill had wealth not from plying his trade as a playwright, but from real estate and ownership shares in the theatres. For the family, he'd bought a

Stratford mansion. Anne, according to the records, was left "his second-best bed with the furniture."

It's one reason why some believe their marriage was as cold as the ice in martinis that unhappy spouses can drink to get through another day. Even so, that bed, not for guests, was likely their marital bed. And Anne, under common law of the time, was entitled to one-third of Bill's estate.

Besides money and sex, children are top of mind in marriage. Anne and Bill had three, including a boy who died around middle-school age. It wasn't supposed to go this way. The boy had two sisters including a twin, Judith, who, almost dead at birth, was the vulnerable one. The plague may have killed the boy, but nobody's sure.

We do know that despite the odds and popular misconceptions, most couples today — about four in five — who lose a child, stay together. Bill and Anne did, although, like men

and women do, they grieved differently in their own time and deeply personal ways.

This brings us to the Academy Awards and "Hamnet," a film to note tomorrow. It's nominated for eight Oscars, including best picture, which says something about its depth and beauty.

Watching it, as a man, I've never thought more sincerely on matters of birthing or mothering a child. Or losing one. This is how good fiction works, leading us deeper into the mess of human experience. Good fiction is truth distilled.

Gaps are filled and liberties taken. This is certainly the case in historical fiction like "Hamnet," the novel the film is based on. Author Maggie O'Farrell later worked with director Cléo Zhao to co-write the film's screenplay.

Bill, that is William Shakespeare, and Anne, that is Anne Hathaway, were very real people. Historians have traditionally believed their marriage was frosty. They had two girls and Hamnet, the boy who died in 1596. With shrewd investing, Shakespeare did purchase a grand family home in Stratford-upon-Avon.

The film adaptation has William and the pregnant Agnes (as O'Farrell calls Anne) marrying out of love, not social convention or fear of what the Joneses think. It focuses especially on Agnes, who early on sees the deep interior passages in her man. She saw Shakespeare before he became Shakespeare.

This, naturally, is the dream of every man, to have a partner who can look at what appears to be cavernous nothingness and see undiscovered treasure. And it's from these mysterious places that Shakespeare, some years after Hamnet's death, found a way to write the similarly-named "Hamlet" among the world's best-known plays.

This is often the case with wounded artists, and thank God it is. They seem to tell the rest of us that if God doesn't seem to be giving you what you ask — never mind if you lose something dearly-held — then maybe he's giving you something else. It's a message for anyone, any time.

Even if you slept through high school English, somewhere along the way you likely picked up "To be or not to be?" That's the existential and annoying question from "Hamlet" that lingers four centuries later. Do I exist and stick around to make something good out of the mess in this ridiculously-troubled world? Or do I simply exit life, literally or otherwise, stage left?

Shakespeare's answer is clear. THOMAS FROESE WRITES ABOUT NEWS, TRAVEL AND LIFE. FIND HIM AT THOMASFROESE.COM AND THOMASFROESE.SUBSTACK.COM.

Hamilton needs real transformation

ROB COOPER

When I ran for city council in Ward 8, I did so because I wanted to see real change in Hamilton.

Like many residents, I was frustrated with the pace of progress at city hall. Hamilton is a city with enormous potential, yet we often find ourselves stuck in the same conversations and delays.

Through my council experience, I've learned that while council plays a crucial role in representing communities, meaningful transformation requires strong leadership from the mayor's office. This understanding has driven my decision to run for mayor.

Hamilton is a multibillion-dollar enterprise responsible for critical infrastructure, public safety, housing and economic development. When decisions go wrong, the consequences impact the daily lives of hundreds of thousands.

Over the past four years, taxes have increased by 23 per cent, while key benchmarks have worsened. When performance declines while costs rise, residents have every right to question how their city is managed. Every \$13-million mistake translates to a one per cent tax increase for Hamilton taxpayers, and there have been numerous such mistakes.

Running a city demands discipline, thoughtful leadership and a focus on delivering results that resi-

dents expect. My professional career reflects this approach. I have been brought in to help organizations transform for decades, building the knowledge and experience necessary to lead complex operations.

I hold 13 degrees and executive designations, including an MBA and CPA (Chartered Professional Accountant), from esteemed institutions like McMaster University and Harvard Business School. However, education alone is insufficient; it's about applying knowledge to real-world challenges.

Earlier in my career, I was vice-president of Strategic Initiatives and vice-president, finance-treasurer at Stelco. I reworked the financial plan to safeguard jobs and, when the company faced bankruptcy, I raised half a billion dollars from investors in less than 30 days. This financing helped protect workers' pensions and stabilize the company.

As an executive consultant at TD, I implemented reforms that enhanced financial transparency. We identified nonviable financial products and eliminated them, which proved critical during the global financial crisis, leaving TD as one of the few banks without writeoffs.

At McMaster University, I served as chief strategy officer, chief internal auditor, and chief risk officer, where I launched a sustainability initiative that provided students

with experiential learning. This program evolved into a minor degree, reducing carbon emissions by 30 million kilograms and saving \$10 million.

These experiences illustrate a common theme: transformation through leadership, strong financial management and focus on outcomes. Hamilton deserves this same strategy.

Our city boasts incredible assets, including a world-class port, a growing international airport, a power manufacturing sector and one of Canada's most productive agricultural regions. Few cities possess such strengths. With the right leadership, Hamilton can become Canada's economic engine.

This requires responsible financial management, smart infrastructure investments, housing support, improved public safety and creating conditions for businesses and workers to thrive. It also necessitates a change in decision-making at city hall, moving the focus from maintaining spending to delivering outcomes.

Hamilton residents deserve better leadership, one that is prepared to implement thoughtful and innovative changes that yield real results.

Having lived in Hamilton my whole life, I share the same frustrations many residents feel regarding our city's direction. However, I also possess a deep belief in Hamilton's potential.

We have the people, resources and opportunities to create a safer, more affordable and more prosperous city. What we need now is experienced leadership to make this vision a reality.

ROB COOPER IS A HAMILTON CITY COUNCILLOR.