

LETTERS

Support Canadian businesses

Re: Don't ban U.S. booze, allow us to boycott it, Aug. 14
David MacLaughlin contends in his commentary that Canadians will have the patriotic morals to boycott U.S. booze if it goes back on liquor store shelves. I don't think so.

There are so many shoppers (along with politicians such as Doug Ford,) who continue to spend their money at U.S. stores, such as Home Depot, where the profits go back to the States.

We should all be boycotting American-owned stores and trying to support Canadian stores where the profits stay in Canada. Such as Canadian Tire and Canadian grocery stores, etc.

My biggest concern is how so many people don't support Canadian companies, but spend so much money buying from that gigantic online conglomerate making profits for an already ridiculously rich Jeff Bezos.

Please try to support local businesses and Canadian companies. Please boycott these American-owned stores and help grow the economic strength of this country.

Yes, sometimes the U.S.-owned stores' prices are lower. But the cost to our economy is so much greater than the pennies bargain hunting consumers save by "selling out" and supporting American companies.

Shop Canadian. Buy Canadian.

Think about how every dollar that you spend in Canadian companies will help keep the true north strong and free.

Kathy Lentz, Hamilton

Ford needs to show leadership

Re: Ford shrugs off Tories spying on Crombie's Jamaica trip, Aug. 14
Spending \$3,000 to investigate an opponent's private life is a blatant misuse of funds and a disturbing violation of personal privacy.

This act of indifference represents an abuse of power and an attempt to discredit an individual rather than engage with the issues that truly matter.

Saying "I wouldn't do it, but things happen" is not leadership — it is an attempt to avoid a behaviour that deserves scrutiny. Public officials have a duty to safeguard taxpayer dollars and respect individual rights. Treating a misuse of public funds and an invasion of privacy as something that simply "happens" reflects poor judgment and a concerning detachment to accountability.

I suspect his enthusiasm would disappear rather quickly if the subject were him, poolside in a Speedo.

Ross Prince, Hamilton

House arrest is ludicrous

Re: No jail time for Norfolk arsonist accused of setting 11 fires in rural county, Aug. 11
This man caused millions of dollars in damage, absolutely on purpose, and caused officials to put in an extraordinary amount of time investigating, and he is sentenced to *house arrest*?

This has got to be just about the most ludicrous thing I've read or heard about in a very long time!

Robert Cox, Hamilton

Cuba needs our support

Re: Cuba will survive, but its revolution may not, Aug. 14
We need to support Cuba. Canadians have enjoyed Cuba's resources, warm weather, beautiful beaches, reasonable prices, low rates for accommodation, and Cuban hospitality for decades now. And then we turn our back on them when they need us the most!

What would happen if Cuba experienced an earthquake today? Would countries ignore the U.S. embargo and send aid to Cuba? Would Canada help Cuba even if the States punished us for doing so?

Are the casualties from earthquakes worse than the casualties caused by starving a nation of its livelihood?

Paul McFarlane, Hamilton

Better late than never

Re: Province moves to regulate data centres, Aug. 14
It's nice that after being in power for over eight years, the Doug Ford Progressive Conservative government is starting to factor environmental concerns into its thinking. It's a bit late, but feel free to start any time.

If, as the article suggests, data centres that use an outside amount of electricity and water will now be subject to Ontario's "existing environmental standards on water consumption and noise," then Premier Ford's knack for follow-through and attention to detail will allow for us all to sleep better.

As a bonus, the water saved from one or two data behemoths opening up can put out forest fires for rather a while.

If the premier is serious about "sparing no expense" on that front, I'm pretty sure the future has already been written.

David Worsley, Kitchener



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The podium at the Aug. 1 funeral of Dawson Abrahams. The 22-year-old from Niagara region was studying physical education at Redeemer University.

Reflecting on life's fragility

**THOMAS FROESE**
OPINION

People drove from all over on a Saturday to meet in Niagara.

I doubt anyone expected to hear so much about dreams.

When I arrived, I sat beside a youth, a leader-in-training who was younger than Dawson. He told me he knew Dawson from camp. Hundreds sat to our right and hundreds to our left.

I'd never met Dawson but had volunteered at the camp where he died and taught at the school where he studied.

We then listened to the stories. Tears were mixed with a strange peace or at least something approaching peace.

This is how it is with some funerals, the ones worth their salt, the ones that can speak to listening ears beyond their walls.

There on the large screen was a photo of Dawson, a natural athlete from when he was a boy and ran track. Look at the medals.

Another image showed the strapping young man being baptized in the lake at the camp he loved and then at mission school in Costa Rica.

Hockey was his other love. Growing up, he had always played a high-calibre game. His teammates from Redeemer University, where he studied physical education, sat nearby wearing their jerseys.

There's his family. His parents. His sister. His closest friends. "I thought I'd say these things at his wedding," said one.

We listened. There were songs, so bittersweet, and prayers. Now I lay me down to sleep. That's how that old children's prayer goes.

One summer night at camp, Dawson laid himself down to sleep and never woke up. No foul play. No toxic substances. No self-harm. No seizure.

No conclusion was the medical finding. His mother's courageous words at the microphone? "We may never know."

Dawson Abrahams, the program director at Camp Crossroads, was 22. Before his birth, the family had lost a five-year-old girl to cerebral palsy. Dear God.

Last summer a young leader from another Ontario camp died in a highway crash.

Then another young man from that camp died from a fallen tree branch.

This is the news. Life is short and death is complete. Look at today's obituaries. The only good from any of it seems to come if you let your certain death quicken the blood and sharpen the senses to your own given days — to do something with them.

At that microphone, Dawson's pastor Bill said such things. There's a time to be born and a time to die. Then he shared his dream: Not a dream of flying or falling or being naked as humans are. This dream was about hand-to-hand combat.

"It was vivid," he said and de-

scribed the chaos of ancient battle. Imagine some movie, the noise and fear and dust and blood mixed with confusion. You may not even know who's on your side, never mind which way to go.

So you look for the banner, the visual anchor always carried by an elite soldier, the signifier. Find the banner and find the way. And there, in this dream, Dawson was carrying the banner and calling, "This is the way!"

After waking, Bill made a banner in honour of Dawson's life. Because some dreams don't need interpretation. They just need to be remembered.

Now I lay me down to sleep. Now I dream. Now the veil between earth and heaven is thinning.

The young man beside me was then gone. And the throng poured out to our cars and homes and summer gardens to think about it.

Someday there will be no more tears or death or battles. Somehow time itself will disappear.

Now I lay me down to sleep. Tonight and tomorrow and 10,000 more nights for most of us. Then the big sleep and that endless dream beyond the sea, the big dream that's like the first day of summer break. School's finished. Now the holidays.

Some days you wonder if it's not all too far beyond belief. Those same days you wonder how anyone could believe anything less.

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

Gaza negotiations are a charade

**GWYNNE DYER**
OPINION

Last month, U.S. President Donald Trump announced "a monumental step toward lasting peace and security" in Gaza.

Mediators from the "Board of Peace," his sketchy rival to the United Nations, had persuaded Hamas to accept his "15-point document" for Hamas disarmament and Israeli withdrawal in the Gaza Strip.

Three days after Trump's announcement, the Israel Defense Forces bombed the Gaza Strip, killing 18 Palestinians.

Don't get me wrong; this is not a piece about the perfidious and wicked Israelis. They are wicked and perfidious, of course, but so are Hamas's leaders.

While neither side is averse to using violence, they use it sparingly most of the time, because both sides need the support or at least the sympathy of the United States to achieve their goals. The result is a charade in which the leaders on both sides pretend to want peace, while carefully sabotaging any step that might make peace possible.

The current round of this long-running sham began with Hamas's decision to tell Trump's people that

they were ready to disarm completely, as long as the Israelis entirely withdraw from the Gaza Strip.

This was a safe move, since they knew Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would never do that.

Netanyahu faces an election in two months, and his only chance of winning it is to retain the trust of the extreme right parties who want to drive all the Palestinians out of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

He doesn't actually have to do that right now, but he must at least look like he wants to do it, so withdrawing from the Gaza Strip would be electoral suicide.

Hamas's move worked. After playing for time as long as possible, Netanyahu said last Sunday that "Israel does not accept the 15-point document."

And that's it, at least until the Israeli election and probably afterwards as well, because most other coalitions that might replace Netanyahu's would be equally adamant about not leaving Gaza.

So what has been accomplished by all this back and forth? Just point-scoring, really. Hamas comes out of this exchange looking a bit more reasonable than the Israeli government, but that is an optical illusion. It plays a bad hand very well, but in the end it is just as extreme, just as uncompromising,

just as driven by religion as the radicals around Netanyahu. And just as marginal, now that the big boys have come out to play.

The future of the Middle East will be decided by the U.S. and Iran, with major supporting roles for Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey and Pakistan. Israel will have only a bit part, doing whatever Washington tells it to do.

However, this is where the crystal ball goes dark.

"Washington" is actually just Trump, and we do not know what he will do. We can't, because he does not know from one day to the next himself, but he is desperate and it could be very big. Bear in mind what he has done already. He has driven all the Gulf states to revise their view of the U.S. as a reliable ally. Saudi Arabia has even ordered him to stop air attacks on Iran from Saudi bases.

He has inadvertently brought a younger, more radical, more ruthless generation to power in Iran, and they take vindictive pleasure in thwarting his efforts to reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

He has caused the three other big powers of western Asia — Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan — to form an alliance under the Mecca Agreement. That's almost 400 million people, all pledged to defend any member that comes under attack, and that includes defence with Pakistan's 170 nuclear weapons.

And Trump might yet convince the Iranian regime that it will never be safe without nuclear weapons of its own.

So all is still to play for, as they say.

GWYNNE DYER IS A LONDON-BASED INDEPENDENT JOURNALIST.