

LETTERS

What is company’s end game?

Well, as it turns out, the U.S. is the largest exporter of foreign steel from any country, exporting roughly two-thirds of the imported steel entering Canada. Lourenco Goncalves, CEO of the American firm Cleveland-Cliffs, who supports tariffs and puts blame on Canada for allowing in too much cheaper foreign steel, presumably understood these trade dynamics before purchasing Stelco.

This raises a legitimate question: could there be behind-the-scenes dealings or strategic plans to eventually shift more of Stelco’s operations to the U.S.? I’m not saying that’s what’s happening, but given the circumstances, it seems like a fair question to ask.

Paul McFarlane, Hamilton

Other cities have figured it out

Other cities of Hamilton’s size have large-scale homeless issues but you wouldn’t know it. For example, during my recent trip to Dublin City, Ireland, I walked endlessly and saw zero encampments, zero panhandlers, zero mental health encounters, zero open drug use and city transit was safe during all hours. How is that?

Perhaps our next mayor and councillors should reach out to them and see just how they’re accomplishing this safe environment for everyone. Heck, I’d be OK using my tax dollars to send over a contingent.

Martin Hawthorn, Hamilton

Give us safety concern details

Re: Hamilton mayoral hopefuls weigh in on housing, safety priorities raised by Black community, Sept. 28

What the, um, heck? Mayoral candidate Rob Cooper doesn’t attend a candidates’ debate because he had “safety concerns related to another candidate’s presence” and that organizers would have to provide security for his attendance. Say what?

Since he apparently gave few further details on his fear for his safety, he swipes a wide brush on the four who did attend: Scarlett Gillespie, Andrea Horwath, Keanin Loomis and Nathalie Xian Yi Yan. Is Cooper suggesting one of them would do him violence?

Has Cooper notified Hamilton Police Service of his “safety concerns?” Will we go from a mayor who virtually disappeared from public view for the first two years of her term to a mayor who won’t face the public for fears for his safety?

Put up or shut up, Mr. Cooper. Vague allegations do no one — including yourself — any favours.

Rob Howard, Hamilton

Council needs a clean sweep

Everyone that I talk to agrees that we need a change on city council. Not just two or three. We’ve had that before and nothing changes, nothing gets better. We need a clean sweep.

If you agree that the roads are much worse now than they ever were, don’t vote for an incumbent!

If you agree that you pay a lot more in property taxes than ever before and get far less for them, don’t vote for an incumbent!

If you agree that the LRT is a very expensive, bad idea, don’t vote for an incumbent!

If you agree that this council spends far too many millions of your dollars on consultants, don’t vote for an incumbent!

If you agree that the council has handled the tiny homes debacle terribly, don’t vote for an incumbent!

If you agree that making Main Street a two-way street is a disruptive, unnecessary, expensive plan, don’t vote for an incumbent!

We need a whole new council with fresh ideas who will listen to the taxpayers of this city.

Advance voting starts this weekend. Please get out and vote and please vote for change. We desperately need it.

Peter Mamer, Ancaster

Copping out on public safety

Re: Woman faces 65 additional charges for fraud, theft at multiple hospitals: OPP, Sept. 26

The arrest of a former health-care worker who is facing dozens of theft and fraud charges across Ontario hospitals exposes a staggering security failure.

By withholding critical details about how these crimes occurred, the Ontario Provincial Police is allowing staff and patients to remain needlessly at risk. The public deserves to know how a single employee was able to systematically plunder restricted wards and rooms across five facilities over two years.

The OPP’s information blackout directly prevents current patients and staff from taking targeted, proactive measures to safeguard their personal belongings and financial information while inside these institutions. Vague warnings to “check bank statements” are entirely reactive and come too late. By prioritizing tight-lipped secrecy over transparency, police are hindering public awareness.

Grant Seifred, Burlington



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THOMAS FROESE

A Jewish man looks toward the camera while pro-Palestinian protesters gather near the United Nations during its recent General Assembly meeting in New York City.

Synagogue attack is a wake-up call



THOMAS FROESE
OPINION

NEW YORK Nobody really needs a definition for courage, but Noah Webster wrote something especially lively in his classic 1828 dictionary.

He called courage “that quality of mind which enables people to encounter danger and difficulties with firmness, or without fear or depression of spirits.”

Add to that, when you see the real deal, you feel it in your bones. In any time.

The real deal is Jeff Smith, the constable who, wounded by gunfire, including to his head, held on to battle for some minutes before help came during that recent gunfight with the ill-fated gunman at Belleville’s Sons of Jacob Synagogue.

Meeting inside with friends and family for bread and worship, you’d wonder why all hell was breaking loose outside. You’d done nothing wrong. Even so, after he shoots you all, your would-be-killer planned to burn the place down to make his point. He’s hated you that much. Imagine.

Imagine you’re Sharlene Weitzman, who covered her son, Finn Luke, as a human shield while those guns blazed.

“I wasn’t going to let my child be killed at 19 years of age for being a

Jew,” she later said. “You can kill me. I’m 59. But you’re not killing him.”

Courage.

While the attacker died from his wounds, he still left his mark, holes from stray bullets that have made certain holes in our nation more visible.

About 400,000 Jewish Canadians live within these societal holes. Statistics Canada reports Jews are about one per cent of our population, but targeted in about 70 per cent — almost 800 incidents last year — of religiously-motivated hate crimes.

This is the gap Const. Smith stepped into.

Of course, any officer knows it may come to this someday, even as the rest of us, civilians, often take it for granted, this protection, this willingness to lay down your life for your community.

It’s a good time, then, to step into some gaps ourselves. If we care about life more than death, and most people do, it’s a good time to show our own courage.

So when you see antisemitism, call it out. Set a different tone. Jews worldwide, remember, don’t necessarily support the policies and actions of the state of Israel. Anytime. It’s a crucial distinction.

Now would also be the moment for our leaders to strike their own discerning and helpful tone, considering Canadians like to tell the world of our credible values.

Here in New York, near the United Nations during its recent Gener-

al Assembly meeting, I came across police containing pro-Palestinian protesters with their “F--- Israel” banners and predictable, vulgar digressions.

You’d imagine they’d be further ahead if they found a discerning tone of their own.

In either case, nearby a young Jewish man looked toward my camera with a perplexed expression, as if he somehow felt blamed for the Middle East mess, historic injustices all-round, especially recent suffering of Gazans, which likely bothers him too.

It wouldn’t be hard to imagine other Jews — there are about 900,000 in New York City’s population of 8.5 million — having similar nuanced feelings.

Interestingly, Zohran Mamdani, New York’s first Muslim mayor and a vocal critic of Israel’s policies, just announced a new initiative to “confront the scourge of antisemitism” and “build a city where Jewish New Yorkers are not only safe but celebrated.”

Which is to say that while evil likes to run amok in a world that’s terribly broken, it can be contained with the right spirit and tools and measures.

Back home in Canada, Const. Smith’s uncommon courage is the clanging wake-up bell that, with any luck, will lead to some new containment within our own borders.

There’s no greater love than to lay down your life for someone else. Const. Smith was willing. Our prayers for full recovery now go with him and his family. We’re not all called to that sacrifice, that kind of courage under fire.

Some of us, however, do need to grow a spine.

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

Strikes should come with a summer cost



CRAIG WALLACE
OPINION

On Sept. 18, it was reported here that the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario will be holding a strike vote in November.

Other teachers’ unions in Ontario have made similar announcements. We are looking at the possibility of labour strife in the educational sector, and all the chaos that would bring: parents scrambling to find care for their children, etc.

For the record, I strongly disagree with the right to strike in the public sector. The private sector should have the right to strike, but not the public sector. In the private sector, the free market forces both the union and the employer to be reasonable in their demands. If either the employer or union are unreasonable, the future of the business may be imperiled as customers can take their business elsewhere.

However, this isn’t the case in the public sector. Governments provide services the private sector cannot or will not provide or are simply too important to leave in the hands of the private sector. These services are usually also monopolies. Their customers have no choice other

than to deal with them. (One could argue that private schools do offer competition; however, the cost of private education is beyond the reach of most Ontario families.) As such, taxpayers are held hostage in an education strike/lockout situation.

While I disagree with the right of the public sector to strike, my opinion carries no weight, as the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that the public sector, with certain exceptions (such as police), does have the right to strike.

With this being the case, I do have a suggestion that would make educational strikes extremely rare: pass legislation that would make it mandatory for any schools days lost due to lockouts/strikes to be made up at the end of the school year.

For example, if the public school board locks out teachers for two weeks, then those two weeks are tacked on to the end of the year, and thus classes would run into the summer.

Imagine the impact. Vacation plans destroyed for students, their families and education workers. Summer jobs and camps in disarray.

Sounds terrible, doesn’t it? And so it should. That is the entire purpose, as such a scenario would become practically unthinkable for either party to use. To use a military

term, it would be the “nuclear option.” Both the union and employer would be raked over the coals by the public and would suffer long-term damage to their professional reputations.

If you disagree, consider the following. In May 2015, the Peel District School Board suffered a three-week-plus strike before the provincial government ordered staff back to work. The school year was not extended. Final exams were cancelled, final grades were calculated using existing marks and the education minister at the time, Liz Sandals, allowed students to receive full credits despite the missed weeks.

You may say this all sounds reasonable. But take a step back. Those students in Peel Region got the same credits and diplomas as did Hamilton students without doing the same amount of work. Hamilton students competed against Peel students for admission to post-secondary institutions and the Peel students did less work. How is this situation in any way just?

Education is supposed to be about what is best for our children and their future. How does labour strife between teachers and the school boards help them?

By all means, continue allowing teachers and their employers the right to strike and/or lock out staff. But forcing the missed time to be made up at the end of the year will ensure such a decision is carefully thought out and the consequences may end up as harsh to the involved parties as the private sector faces.

CRAIG WALLACE IS A HAMILTON RESIDENT AND AUTHOR OF FIVE BOOKS.