LETTERS

Tax revolt led by wealthy?

Re: Taxes top new council's agenda, Nov. 19

Actually the most consistently reported priorities were for infrastructure spending, something that will necessarily increase taxes.

Only the Ancaster councillor focused exclusively on taxes. Like Fred Bennink, most who spoke against taxes were from the wealthiest areas of the city. A one per cent tax increase on a million-dollar home is five times the same hike on a $200,000 home. Perhaps that explains the claims that everyone is up in arms about city tax hikes.

After all, we don't know what most people want since more than two-thirds of eligible voters didn't vote — hardly an indication of a so-called tax revolt.

Don McLean, Hamilton

Thanks for ignoring former PM

I would like to congratulate The Spectator on the fact that it is the only publication (print or online) that doesn't post incessant pictures and stories about our former PM and his new love. Thank you so, so much and please keep it up.

Al Dionisi, Stoney Creek

Ford acting like a dictator

Re: Ford bill would gut public's environmental rights, Nov. 16

I do not understand how someone who is voted in by the people and is being paid by our tax dollars can just put these types of bills into place.

It is unreasonable and unbelievable that Doug Ford can continually take away the people's voices and concerns. His reasoning that the people gave him this right when they voted him in is skewed.

He is being a dictator with no conscience and needs to be reined in.

Mary Hickey, Burlington

Spec not above criticism

Re: Rush to judgment dangerous, Nov. 17 letters

From time to time, accusations of biased coverage appear in The Spec. My letter published today that excoriates the paper for what I saw as a less-than-timely response to the attack on the air cadets' commander should put paid finally to any notion that The Spec sees itself above criticism.

Thank you.

Neville Newman, Hamilton

Just more taxes in disguise

My husband always swore gambling was a tax on idiots. I think that might have changed to a tax on the desperate. Either way, the Doug Ford government is looking to boost its coffers with more taxes in disguise all while spending our money on promoting his "investments."

Irene Hough, Hamilton

A shout-out to Schnurr

Congratulations, Paula Schnurr! Having had the pleasure of working alongside you at McMaster, it's wonderful to see your continued success. Your dedication, enthusiasm and genuine passion for your athletes have always been evident.

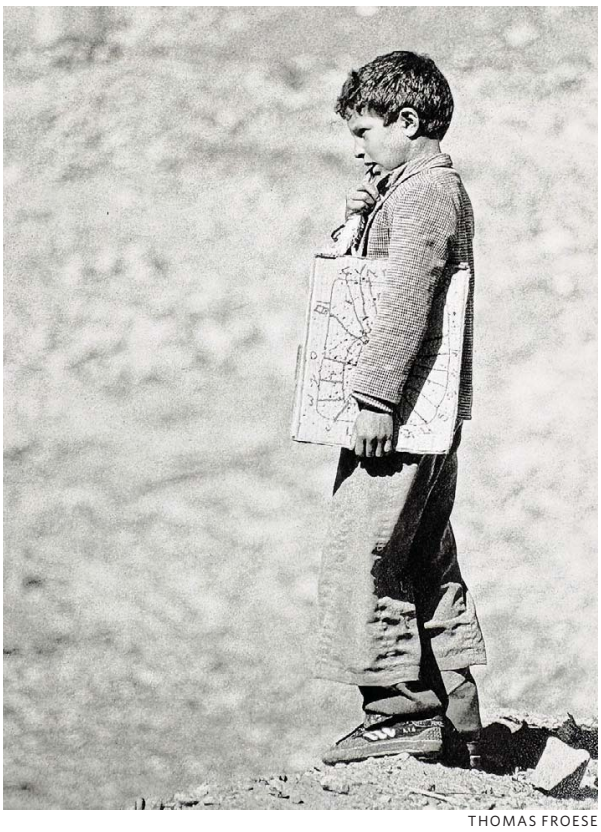
It's especially rewarding to see you continue to inspire young people and achieve such outstanding results. Well deserved, Paula. Congratulations!

Ross Prince, Hamilton

World Children's Day is a reminder of their struggles



THOMAS FROESE
OPINION



THOMAS FROESE

This photo of a Yemeni boy is reflective of how many youth around the world can have their childhood threatened or stolen, Thomas Froese writes.

Talking about childhood, one day some years ago I saw a boy in Yemen, as plain as any Arab boy could be.

He wore a small, old man's jacket and sucked a treat in one hand while holding a homemade board game in the other. He looked like he was thinking about things important to a boy of his nature.

Standing there in the middle of nowhere, he didn't speak. But he seemed to say something anyway, namely that you can lose your childhood in two ways.

The first is from the misfortune of being born in the wrong place at the wrong time.

It's something to consider because yesterday, Nov. 20, was World Children's Day.

There wasn't such awareness through most of history, no children's day in, say, Edwardian England. That's when "Peter Pan," the story about the boy who wouldn't grow up, was created.

James Barrie wrote it in response to his mother's never-ending grief over James' brother, David, who died at 13 in a skating accident. The Pan story somehow kept David, the boy who never grew up, alive.

In 1904, theatre-goers in top hats and horse-drawn carriages first saw the show. Meanwhile, children across England and Europe laboured in domestic servitude or in factories or mines or shipping yards, this to keep their families from starving.

Remember, prior to vaccines — always a lively topic these days — children also routinely died of measles or scarlet fever or tuberculosis or you name it. Unlike in "Peter Pan," the words "forever young" meant simply that you died young.

The world, or at least enough of it, changed for the better. So did formal recognition of childhood. On Nov. 20, 1959, the United Nations adopted its Declaration of the Rights of the Child.

Its cousin, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted Nov. 20, 1989, became the fastest, most widely ratified human rights treaty ever.

The two-year-old who screams bloody murder when you're getting them off to bed might make you think otherwise, but these global statements affirm what we've always known: that children are people, albeit little people, with rights as members of the human family.

Even so, in Yemen today, about 4.5 million kids aren't even in school. More than 11,000 were killed or maimed in the worst of Yemen's civil war from 2015-22. In 2026, hundreds more have perished with renewed fighting between Iranian-backed Houthis and Yemen's Saudi-backed government.

Civil war has displaced several million Sudanese children. Millions of Ukrainian kids don't know when the next Russian attack might kill them, or their mom or dad. Millions more in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Haiti, don't have enough food. In Gaza, many thousands of war-traumatized children need clean water and sanitation.

Remember the American Tomahawk missile that killed at least 120 Iranian schoolchildren in February?

And according to the 2026 Kids-Rights Index, it's Afghanistan, where 11 million children need humanitarian aid, that ranks last of 194 nations for children's rights.

It's all childhood denied. Childhood robbed. Childhood stolen by time and place.

The second way to lose your childhood is by giving it away. This hits closer to home, especially for driven people and places.

You get so tied up in the exhausting work of proving yourself and fortifying your adult armour, that you lose any sense of the world's wonder. You lose the fearless curiosity you once had. You trade in your imagination for squalid, grown-up conformity. You play for keeps now, not for fun.

In Peter Pan terms, you become Captain Hook. This is the other way to lose your childhood. You lose it carelessly, like you give away your birthright for a mess of pottage.

It's hard to know which loss is worse.

Plenty of people might gladly lose the latter over the former. You needn't know much about Maslow's hierarchy of needs to know that it's better to have a living body than a dead spirit.

Or is it?

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

I know why the Nvidia affair matters so much

MICHAEL KOVRIG



REUTERS FILE PHOTO

The scandal surrounding ex-Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang is a symptom of how far China will go in advancing its interests, writes Michael Kovrig.

China is on a quest to dominate the commanding heights of technology. That makes the United States its prime rival and target for intelligence and silicon chips. I was made an early casualty of this high-tech cold war when Beijing's Ministry of State Security (MSS) took me hostage in a gambit to protect Huawei Technologies and its CFO Meng Wanzhou after Canada arrested her at Washington's request.

Last week, as Huawei's trial finally moved toward a close, the rivalry claimed a new casualty: Nvidia's CEO. Jensen Huang resigned after admitting to an affair with Alice Huang (no relation), a Chinese executive who U.S. officials believe was working for the MSS. That spiked cocktail of romance and spying has intoxicated the internet. The real question now is how to treat the hangover for Nvidia, Washington and artificial intelligence. The diagnosis requires understanding how — and how hard — China works to obtain high-end technologies by any means necessary.

Washington blocks American companies from selling China the leading-edge chips its firms can't yet make. Alice Huang began leading Singapore-based Megaspeed in 2023, after which it reportedly bought over $4.6 billion (U.S.) in Nvidia hardware and shipped some of it to China. U.S. intelligence reportedly believes she was also collecting information on Jensen Huang and urging Nvidia to make its top chips more available in China. (No charges have been filed and Beijing and Megaspeed deny wrongdoing.)

A loophole in U.S. export controls lets Chinese firms rent compute — the processing power behind AI — from data centres that use American hardware in third countries, mainly Malaysia or Singapore. Rerouted chips supply the rest. Megaspeed apparently delivered on both ends.

Access to Jensen Huang could also have given Beijing insight into Nvidia's plans and negotiations with Washington over export controls — and a channel for influence. The Nvidia chief had long made the self-serving case that selling China advanced chips would keep it hooked on American silicon and divert business from competitors like Huawei. Now everyone's rightly questioning that improbable argument — and who encouraged it.

So, is Alice Huang an intelligence officer? Not necessarily. The honey trap is one of ancient China's 36 stratagems and still widely used. But her profile suggests something no less damning: a "white glove" who fronts for hidden beneficiaries. The firm she ran with her husband, Kang Wei, Shanghai Hexi Investment, was fined by Chinese regulators for disclosure violations. Megaspeed followed the pattern: its assets skyrocketed from about $33 million in 2023 to about $3 billion the following year after lining up Alibaba as a key customer. Kang introduced her to Jensen Huang and joked she was the latter's "personal assistant." Alice Huang and Kang Wei told investors they had means to get Nvidia chips to Chinese clients.

American officials reportedly suspect the MSS recruited Alice Huang after she grew close to Jensen Huang. China's National Intelligence Law requires all organizations and citizens to support and co-operate with state intelligence work — a decree tailor-made for someone with her level of access. Fixers are particularly vulnerable to pressure: Chinese regulators fined her husband, and inquiries into stock manipulation led to him being detained in Shanghai this year. As I experienced, exposure to China's vague laws is a favoured weapon of the security services.

The U.S. began investigating Megaspeed in late 2024, and an audit reportedly found it had imported 50,000 more chips than Nvidia could locate. The Commerce Department halted a probe after Nvidia's top lawyer contacted the official overseeing export controls. Secretary of State Marco Rubio reportedly warned U.S. President Donald Trump in May, just before Jensen Huang jetted with him to Beijing. The Nvidia boss told Trump he had "absolutely no idea" she was a spy. Beijing would reject that excuse from one of its own executives: under its 2023 Counter-Espionage Law, organizations must take counter-espionage measures, and their officials can be punished when they fail.

Considering all that, the Trump administration's inaction is indefensible, as is Nvidia's. At the very least, Commerce should enforce existing rules and determine whether Megaspeed belongs on its Entity List.

The broader lesson is that the Chinese Communist Party instrumentalizes everything and everyone it can reach, and Nvidia and its CEO were obvious targets who should have been on guard against not only espionage but also efforts to align its interests with the Party's. In China's game of shadows, a player can be an MSS officer, an asset, or a fixer. In all cases, they must be treated as if they're serving the Party.

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