



# Opinion

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### Verbatim

"As we made clear with our climate emergency declaration, we acknowledge the grave realities of a warming planet. As an educational institution, we also recognize our responsibility to contribute to climate change mitigation to allow current and future generations of students to live in a sound environment."

UW president Feridun Hamdullahpur on commitment to reduce carbon footprint of investments by 50% by 2030.

### The Monitor

The latest data show that the number of people who've already had a shot or who will take one as soon as it is available to them now stands at 79%, up from 63% only a month ago. A total of just 21% show some measure of hesitancy, most of whom indicate they can be persuaded to be vaccinated. Just 7% say they will never take a COVID-19 shot.

Abacus poll

OBSERVER EDITORIAL

## Woolwich has clear choice on tent city proposal

**P**ublic reaction to a proposal to relocate a tent city for the homeless to a vacant lot near Breslau was quick and clear: no way, no how.

The vast majority of feedback since the idea surfaced last week is decidedly negative, often expressed in unambiguous language. A presentation to Woolwich council Tuesday night did nothing to change that stance.

What should be clear is that the proposal from A Better Tent City (ABTC) is short on details, and remains more of a pipedream than an actual plan. The group is seeking compassion rather than the required formal scrutiny of the planning process.

Currently set up on a former industrial event space, Lot42, in Kitchener, ABTC provides shelter in tiny homes (modified garden sheds) and tents. The sale of that property means the group has to vacate by June 20. Having secured the use of a 55-acre piece of farmland on Spitzig Road courtesy of the Catholic Church diocese, the group is proposing to relocate some 30 to 40 homeless people to the site.

Short on details, the plan is to service the lot with a well, septic system and electricity with the goal of establishing a farm operation that would see the residents learn farming skills as they grow their own food, establishing a market garden and similar agricultural projects.

Breslau residents vocally opposed to the idea have been letting township officials know of their displeasure. There is certainly a fair bit of NIMBY-ism at play, as numerous residents point to the perceived hazards of placing dozens of homeless people with drug addictions, mental health problems and other issues in a rural setting adjacent to a school (Woodland Christian High School) and the village.

Such concerns are valid, but there are a variety of very real hurdles that also cast doubt on the proposal. Practical considerations alone pose perhaps insurmountable difficulties, from the lack of transportation to lack of amenities. That said, ABTC organizers maintain that all services, from meals to medical care and methadone treatment for addictions, are brought to the residents, making the location less of an issue.

As it stands, however, the group can't simply relocate the sheds and their occupants to the site: township zoning prohibits that use. The first step would be a formal application for official plan and zoning changes to accommodate the proposed uses, a process that could take a year or more and require ABTC to provide a long list of studies to support its bid.

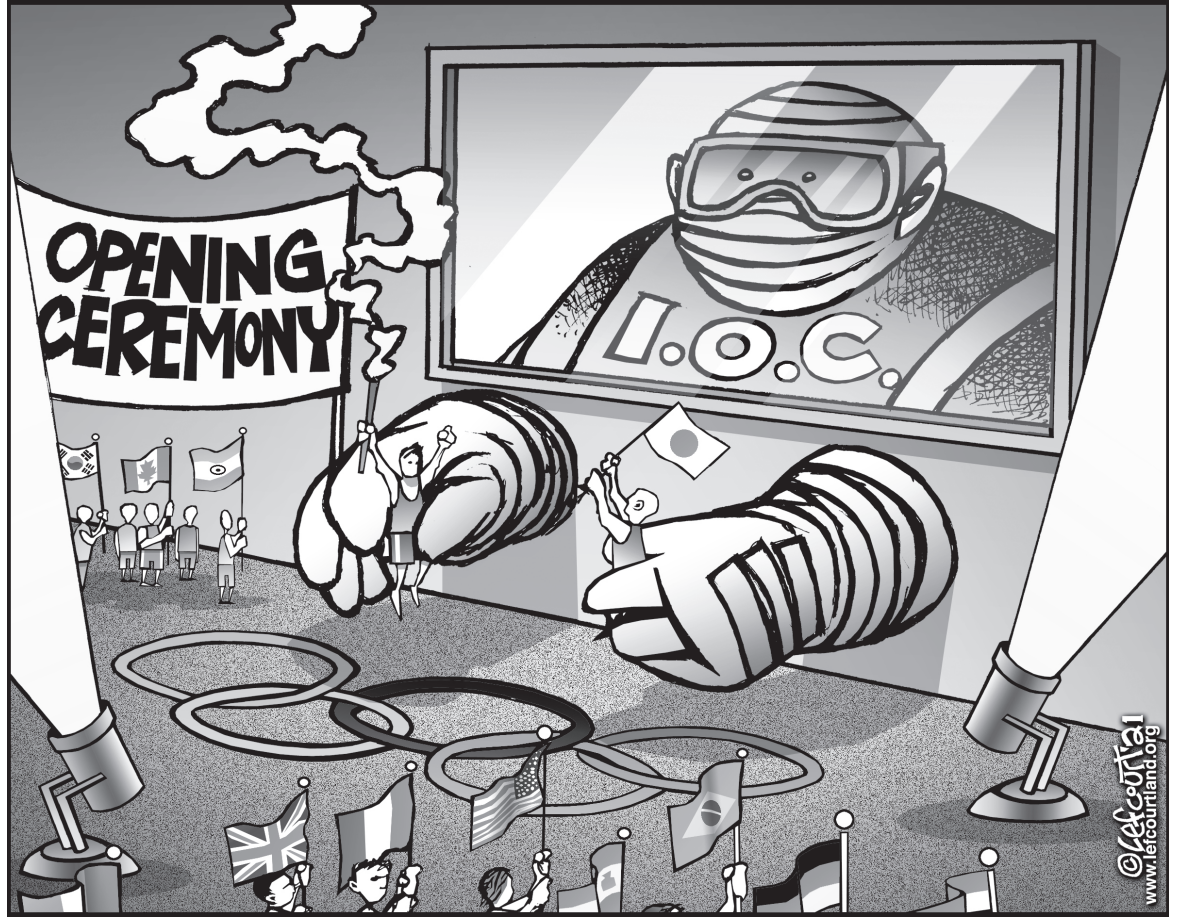
There township has seen no formal application. In fact, the plan for a quick move to the site came as news to Woolwich officials last week when ABTC began knocking on neighbours' doors to notify them of the group's arrival. If the group moves ahead with relocating to the site, the township could be forced to intervene, whether by physical removal or other legal avenues.

In the event of a formal application, Woolwich will have to deal with the project as it does with any other development plan, including a public consultation period, the results of which should be clear after Tuesday night.

Based on public reaction, any council decision would be clear. But even based purely on the planning and public policy criteria, the township would be hard-pressed to vote in favour of what ABTC is proposing – the numbers just don't add up. That includes the budget: the group says it has \$160,000 on hand. Even with the prospect of more donations, that kind of money won't get it very far down the planning road, let alone the ambitious, and costly, ideas it has for the site.

Fast-tracking the request would be a disservice to everybody else who has followed the process, sometimes years in the making. Moreover, rushing through an ill-considered decision makes no sense.

Given what was discussed the other night, the group has a long way to go. In all likelihood, they can't get there from here.



ANALYSIS OF CURRENT WORLD EVENTS

## Some good news on the climate front

**I** see a huge and growing gap between the rhetoric and the reality," said Fatih Birol, head of the International Energy Agency, two weeks ago, but he despaired a bit too soon. Last week, a Dutch court ruled that Royal Dutch Shell, one of the world's biggest oil companies, must cut its global carbon dioxide emissions by 45 per cent by 2030.

Judge Larisa Alwin's ruling in the Hague district court was "not so much a shot across the bow as a direct hit to the hull of Big Oil," said Mark Lewis, chief sustainability strategist at BNP Paribas Asset Management. "No amount of patching up the hole will do. Shareholders and society want the vessel completely overhauled."

The Dutch court said that Shell's declared plan for reducing its carbon emissions was vague, inadequate and non-binding, and ordered it to cut its total emissions by almost half in the next nine and a half years. That includes the emissions from all the oil and gas Shell sells, not just its own operational emissions.

The judge based her decision on the fact that Shell is violating Dutch law and the European Convention on Human Rights that guarantee the 'right to life.' The company



**GWYNNE DYER**  
Global Outlook on World Affairs

is recklessly making emissions that endanger human life by causing global heating.

She linked her verdict directly to the Paris Climate Agreement of 2015, which clearly states that keeping the increase in average global temperature below 1.5°C requires 45 per cent emissions cuts by 2030.

Shell's vague promise to make 20 per cent cuts by then simply didn't meet the requirement, she said, and its non-binding promises of bigger cuts between 2030 and 2050 would come too late to matter. (The World Meteorological Organisation said last week that there is a 40 per cent chance of the world temporarily crossing the +1.5°C threshold at least once in the next five years.)

It was Friends of the Earth (and 17,000 co-plaintiffs) that brought the case in the Hague, but other activists are planning similar cases in half a dozen other countries. Even faster moving, perhaps, are the shareholder revolts that are forcing oil companies to take their emissions seriously.

Again it was Shell that

took the first hit. The Dutch activist group 'Follow This' has been coordinating shareholders rebellions at Shell's annual general meetings since 2016, when it only got 2.8 per cent support for a resolution calling on the company to cut CO2 emissions. This month it got 30 per cent of the votes, including those of some big institutional investors.

Follow This also got 20 per cent of shareholders' votes at British Petroleum's AGM last week for a similar resolution, and although both companies rejected the resolutions they are required to report back to the investors on why they did so.

On the same day, the U.S. oil giant ExxonMobil was forced to accept the election of two pro-climate activists on its 12-person board (the vote was organized by the small environmentalist hedge fund 'Engine No. 1'). And 'Follow This' got a 61 per cent majority for a resolution at Chevron's AGM May 27 forcing the company to reduce its carbon emissions.

It was always going to be nip and tuck. The time needed to persuade the climate doubters and mobilize the apathetic was always going to leave very little time for actually getting

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