

Deal done, time to breathe

Say goodbye to NAFTA, and say hello to the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement.

In keeping with how many international trade negotiations play out, Canada struck a last-minute agreement with its biggest trader late on Sunday night.

While the agreement is not 100 per cent in the books, as it requires lawyers to give a final read through, this news was welcomed by many Canadians.

With the apocalyptic daily headlines and threatening language from U.S. President Donald Trump, uncertainties about trade relations with our closest neighbour were reaching never before seen levels throughout 2018.

These fears were particularly hefty for those in the auto industry, with threats of 25 per cent tariffs on Canadian automobiles made by Trump. These tariffs, if enacted, would have been crippling to Oshawa's economy which is still heavily reliant on the auto industry.

This looming issue found its way into the local municipal election, as when candidates spoke on the booming economy in Oshawa they sometimes had to note that a great deal of that progress could be negated by these tariffs.

Considering the president's habit of making threats and not following up on them (is that wall built yet?), some may have simply brushed off the thoughts of those tariffs, but it was a scary thought none the less.

The reality is that Trump and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, as pointed out by Oshawa MPP Colin Carrie in the past, actually had little to do with the NAFTA negotiations.

And although the two leaders got most of the press, it was the negotiating teams of both sides that should receive the credit, or lack of, depending on opinion, for finally striking the deal.

The federal government's position through the negotiation process has always been that it would only accept a "fair deal" for Canada.

Whether the deal is "fair" or not is truly up to one's own interpretation and it remains to be seen how it will all play out.

For now, however, it appears Oshawa and the auto industry can breathe a sigh of relief and focus on business. As well, hopefully, the federal government can move forward and focus on the growing list of other issues it needs to address.



Letters to the Editor

Handgun ban would be "forward thinking"

Dear Editor,

I know that I have written several letters about gun control, but maybe this time someone will care. The United Kingdom has banned handguns and the murder rate has fallen tenfold (according to what was written on my Facebook page) so I do not know if it is true. I am hoping and wishing that it is very true, but alas I do not know. It would be very forward thinking of us if all guns were banned, but by just having hand guns banned we would therefore be the "enlightened" ones.

I realize that there are gun owners out there that are very responsible and follow all gun laws to the letter, I do not live under a rock. I am sure a lot of people already know that Toronto is having quite a problem with guns and the wounding and killing of certain

people!

I believe this will be the highest number of people murdered in Toronto in its history - 81 so far this year. So far the news has reported that there have been 36 murders by shooting and approximately 220 people wounded. If we had stricter gun laws, this would not be happening, and I am sure there are other people like minded. I know that the criminal element will not be put off by banning handguns, but it is a start.

Most criminals steal the handguns from legitimate hand gun owners. If we had a ban on hand guns and a minimum jail term then it just might work.

I do not see the Premier doing anything or for that matter the Chief of Police of the City of Toronto in the Province of Ontario.

Ron Horner

Ford's actions an "attack on democracy"

Dear Editor,

Some 250 years ago, the great British jurist, Lord Mansfield gave a judgment with the stirring maxim "Let justice be done though the Heavens fall." A maxim that has guided democracy and the courts since.

It would appear that some judges of the Ontario Superior Court have renounced that rule of conduct with their judgment allowing the government of Ontario to diminish the rights of all Ontarians by abridging their Freedom of Expression and taking away their democratic rights to an electoral independence from government interference. The court has judged that it is legal and constitutional for a thuggish bully to exact vengeance on his political opponents by throwing the City of Toronto into chaos and depriving its citizens of adequate access to their councillors.

Added to that was the threat to use the notwithstanding clause to ensure the diminishing of rights if the courts did not approve. Rule of Law be damned! Judicial independence be damned. Ford will brook no interference in his governing by whim and personal bias. Judicial Review, the strongest protection against arbitrary actions and tyranny, is not to stand in his way.

The irony in this is that Lord Mansfield's judgment came from just such an issue. From John Wilkes'

insistence that people had the right to the electoral representation that they chose - not to have it imposed on them.

It is not surprising that Ford does not know of these niceties of civil society or understand that they are the cornerstone of that state. What is unacceptable is the support of his cabinet and caucus: many of whom are fully conversant with these things. They have chosen personal power and paycheque over principle. That the Canadian Constitution is interpreted as making this possible places Canada firmly in that tier of nations still teetering between liberal democracy and dictatorship.

Not since Confederation has there been such a blatant attack on the Freedoms of Canadians and on liberal democracy. Democracy is much more than "one man, one vote." It includes the inviolability of the freedom of expression that this act abridges. It includes the right of the people to decide the nature of their representation. It does not include the right of government to arbitrarily impose that on society.

There is an old adage that says, "In politics a fool is more dangerous than a villain and must therefore be treated as a villain." For the PC Caucus and leadership collection of fools, villains and those who are both, how should they be treated.

John Peate

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Students bear brunt of strikes

There is a storm brewing between the provincial government and Ontario's secondary school educators as negotiations of new collective agreements are set to begin later this month.

This relationship has always been contentious at best.

From the mid-90s to early-2000s, the two sides have clashed consistently as the Harris government made education cuts while trying to balance the province's books.

And it's not just the Conservative governments that have earned the ire of the teacher's unions.

When the Liberal government imposed Bill 115 in 2012, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation quickly instructed its members to stop their involvement in any extracurricular activities.

Three years later in 2015, as collective agreements were coming up for renegotiation, there were roving strikes across the province, forcing thousands of children out of the classroom.

Recently, both the teachers' union and the provincial government have been launching rhetoric at each other.

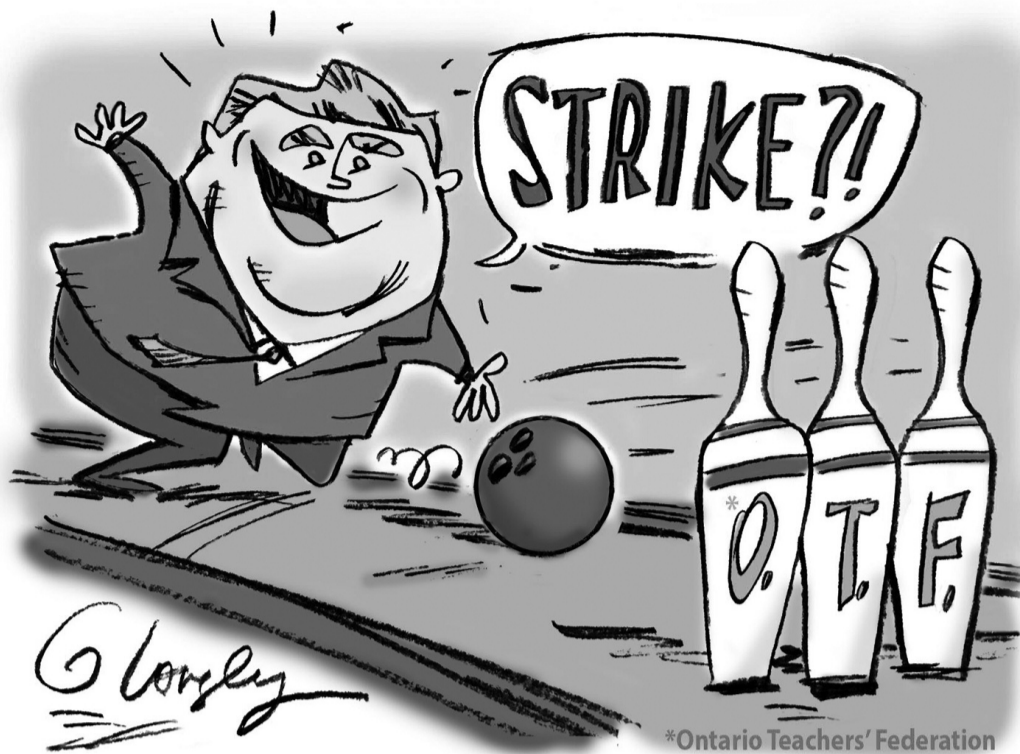
Premier Doug Ford and other PC MPPs have accused the union of using students as a pawn in their campaign, while the OSSTF has stated the provincial government is on the road to "decimating" Ontario's education system.

While both sides claim to have their respective best intentions for students, as the negotiations begin hopefully all involved realize it is those young learners who bear the brunt of any labour disputes.

Secondary school students already face a significant amount of stress and anxiety, as their grades play a tremendous role in their postsecondary choices and ultimately their career paths. In addition to their studies, many of them must also hold down part-time or full-time jobs.

The possibility of not being in the classroom come September is unneeded stress, especially for those entering their final year.

Over the spring and summer months, Ontario students should not become a victim of political grandstanding on part of both the government and the union.



Letters to the Editor

Reader says teacher job losses inevitable

Dear Editor,

I must explain myself before the topic. I ran into a person that I used to work with and I believe I said some very unkind things to her. I am very sorry, and I believe that you know who you are.

Mr. Ford is a liar much the same as Mike Harris was. He will put it differently or say it in a different way meaning a different thing.

I am talking about teachers losing their jobs. My niece is a teacher for the Catholic board so I do not really know how it works, although I think that it works much the same as the public board. There are 369 teachers in Peel about to lose their jobs and Mr. Ford has always stated that no one will lose their jobs.

Because their contracts are not being renewed does not make being unemployed any better. They are still losing their jobs.

I do agree with one thing though, people should not be teaching at age 70 and I do not care how young

you supposedly look or how active you are, you are still an old man/woman.

Now that Alberta has had its election, Mr. Ford must be ecstatic that there is another Conservative in power.

He seems to think that climate change does not exist. I have yet to hear what Mr. Ford plans to do about the "cap and trade" that he eliminated. And now they are trying to say that the federal government is trampling on our civil rights and taking money out of our pockets.

Does it not make sense to pay a little now instead of paying a lot in 10 or 20 years. If not, then your children and grandchildren will be paying through the roof, cussing you out, and wondering why you did not pay because it was you that created the problem in the first place. I cannot do that and I hope that there are a lot more Canadians that feel this way.

Ron Horner

A kind word for the Oshawa Express

Dear Editor,

I've been meaning to write for some time to thank the Oshawa Express and its many great writers for all the in-depth articles on issues of the day. Some have been political, others involved heritage and some just to share an interest.

I appreciate the coverage given to issues like the Durham York incinerator, the redevelopment of the

Genosha Hotel, and most recently the article on the late Michael Starr.

It is important for us to be reminded of our history and our heroes. How can we know where we are going if we don't know where we've come from.

Thank you to Dave Flaherty for this latest article and thanks to the Oshawa Express for being the newspaper you are.

Dan Yourkevich

RCMP 'too busy' to deal with SNC-Lavalin

Dear Editor,

Responding to Mr. John Peate who believes the RCMP should not be investigating SNC Lavalin on the basis his beloved Justin Trudeau can do no wrong.

More to the point the RCMP would be hard pressed to investigate anything since the

RCMP is totally occupied with insuring the comfort of the thousands of illegals; duties including bag-

gage handling; getting them to their preferred Radisson hotels; insuring their set up with social and health benefits; and legal aid.

I hope this helps Mr. John Peate understand why the RCMP haven't the time to investigate the criminal activities of Justin Trudeau's involvement in SNC Lavalin.

John Tsigaris

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Moving to fill the void

We knew this day would come.

Like the loss of an ailing loved one, it was inevitable but a shock all the same at the end.

The announcement on Monday that GM will close its Oshawa plant in 2019 as part of a global restructuring shakes this city to the core.

GM has been the thread of Oshawa for almost a century. It was woven extensively through this city, so deep its roots ran, we don't know the economic fallout yet to come when GM finally ceases to exist here.

But the city has had years to plan for this inevitable closing as GM has continued to dwindle from its glory days of 30,000 plus employees and all those people employed throughout the city in subsidiary feeder plants. We've had the opportunity to become accustomed to a lesser and more precarious GM through years of attrition.

Oshawa has tried to reinvent itself by remaking it into a city of information and technology. Just look at the college and universities here.

But there's a massive chunk of the Oshawa landscape that will need to be revitalized, not just for economic reasons.

Unfortunately, GM is not the only casualty in the vastly changing economic climate in the world today.

Brick and mortar stores are succumbing to the pressures of internet sales. This month alone, Lowe's has closed some stores and the home décor chain of Bowring and Bombay, both drowning in debt, are selling off all goods to cease operations. And we all remember the outcome of Sears last fall. There will be more to come.

The internet has been a bully to traditional business while it has been a boon for others who have been able to adjust to a new way of thinking. So, even though it has its many benefits, it has also created a dubious economy for those left in its wake. The old way of doing business just doesn't cut it anymore. Consumers have no loyalty and even more troublesome is the lack of regard to how their purchases support an economy not usually related to this country.

But the internet is not the issue with the impending loss of GM. There is so much more involved globally. History and sentiment no longer play a role in the bottom line of companies in an effort to keep competitive. That's life.

Here in Oshawa, we already have a head start. It has been a slow and steady decline of the city's once largest employer, so we have been given an opportunity to prepare to deal with this loss.

No one likes change but we are in a changing world and we need to move forward to fill the void that was once GM. And in the future, let's support our own businesses. They are the ones who will give back directly in return.



Glendon

Letters to the Editor

A devastating loss for Oshawa

Dear Editor,

This announcement rips me open from the heart and I literally broke down in tears.

I delivered newspapers to Colonel R.S. McLaughlin, the founder of General Motors Canada, in the early 50s in Oshawa, when Oshawa was General Motors. This company has been the heart and soul of Oshawa since

1907. It was how I was able to raise my family and the pain is crushing for me when I think of other today who will struggle trying to do the same. My heart goes out to my old hometown and all the people that call this place home because it's more than GM employees that are devastated, it's the entire community.

Charles Konkle

Thumbs down to Ontario's Bill 47

Dear Editor,

Bill 47 is anything but a balanced approach. I don't know who the Chamber of Commerce is speaking on behalf of.

I didn't hear a uproar from small business saying they couldn't afford the minimum wage going to \$15 an hour on Jan. 1, 2019. The fact is the sky didn't fall as some business CEOs predicted.

Most small businesses simply passed their cost onto the customers. I had no problem paying a little extra knowing that I was helping the minimum wage earner receive their fair share of the pie.

The government of Ontario knows no shame. Standing up at Queen's Park cheering and clapping like a bunch of idiots for taking a dollar an hour off the table of the poorest workers.

This is simply something you just don't do.

Gord Vickers

A simpler approach to recycling

Dear Editor,

I get Jeff Goodall's well-intentioned point in his letter to the editor, "Looking at the bigger picture" from Nov. 7. But, I believe that citizens have "parted ways" with their recycling put out on scheduled pick up days.

If said citizens are putting out newsprint, cardboard, plastic, steel, pop cans, etc., I know scavengers can't "reflip" these items for any gain - save for pop cans at 60 cents per pound, but that's a lot of cans.

If homeowners take their beer cans, liquor containers, etc. to the brewers retail outlets (this is all that is really "flippable"?) and there's not

much curbside attractions for said "scavengers."

There are homeowners that put out heavy steel items/appliances, etc. for said "roadside recyclers," saving a trip to the northern Oshawa Transfer Station.

I really don't feel that it's necessary to "run sentry" over your curbside recyclables for a night as Mr. Goodall suggests. I think most homeowners have better things to do with their night (hoping of course that "scavengers" don't scatter items to and fro "at the curb.")

I think in the big picture it's a win-win for everybody.

R.M. Hues

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