

COMMENT

We're doing this because we want to really establish evidence — to figure out where women are in leadership in Hamilton.

KAREN BIRD, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AT MCMASTER UNIVERSITY AND CO-AUTHOR OF THE WOMEN AND DIVERSITY EXCLERATOR PROJECT

A new study shows women are under-represented in senior leadership positions across Hamilton and Halton.

International experience an asset

Community involvement in Ward 9 shows my commitment



DOUG CONLEY

As a resident of Upper Stoney Creek for the past 33 years, and a former city councillor, it is my privilege to be running for the position of city councillor in Ward 9. It has always been my desire to get back into politics and the timing is right to do so.

My interest in local politics began as a school trustee for six years with the Hamilton-Wentworth County School Board. As a trustee, I served on many committees and was the chair of both the salary and the business management committees.

My experience includes serving for nine years (1991–2000) as a councillor for the City of Stoney Creek, representing Upper Stoney Creek. During this time, Stoney Creek was a rapidly growing area with many accompanying issues, which we successfully brought to resolution. Throughout my three terms, I chaired and was a member of several committees, including parks and recreation, planning, and engineering. I was also appointed a member of the conservation authority for three years, and the Stoney Creek Non-Profit Organization for six years. As a former Stoney Creek city councillor, I know the “ins and outs” of the political world and how to achieve results within it. I know that success is only attained by listening to the voices of the people and having the courage and integrity to fight for their needs at city council.

During the past 23 years at O'Hara Technologies Inc., I have been the international sales manager and the director of sales and marketing. My vast experience working with companies from around the world will be a definite asset in attracting new business to Hamilton.

My devotion to this ward can also be observed through my extensive community involvement. I have coached soccer and served as a member of the board of directors for the Glanbrook Youth Soccer Club. I was a member of the board of directors for The Olive Branch, and I am a volunteer for both The Dream Center and Medical Ministry International. At my local church, I am chair of the kindness outreach committee, which provides food and clothing to those in need.

I remember when we were known as the “Ambitious City.” The success factors that earned us this reputation need to be brought back to city hall. We need to make sound decisions that take into consideration the socio-economic needs of the community. My platform will focus on optimizing the functionality of city council, determining the most appropriate transportation solutions for our city, building sustainable communities, and making the most of our resources. I believe that through hard work and co-operation we can become the “Ambitious City” once again.

We can achieve this by addressing issues as stated above; all of this being carried out with the possibility of reducing taxes.

On the lighter side, I enjoy working out at a local gym on a regular basis. Also, after many years, I continue to support the Hamilton Tiger-Cats as a season-ticket holder ... rain or shine, win or lose. Through 48 years of married life with Sandra, we are the proud parents of three adult children and I thoroughly enjoy every opportunity to spend time with them and my three adorable grandchildren.

Please visit www.dougconley.ca. If you have any questions or would like to support my campaign, please call me at 905-531-3334. I look forward to and am thankful for your support in the election.



Note to all registered municipal election candidates:

The Spectator's editorial board invites all registered candidates in this fall's election to submit one piece of commentary, which we will publish on the Comment page and online. There are some conditions attached to this offer.

Submissions must be no more than 750 words in length and will be subject to editing for length, clarity and taste.

Submissions that are personal attacks on incumbent politicians or anyone else will not be published. This offer is intended to give candidates the opportunity to express why they're seeking office and what they will do if elected.

Submissions must be accompanied by a photo of the author, in the form of a high-resolution jpeg image attached to the same email as the submission.

The Spectator reserves the right to reject submissions if deemed inappropriate.

Publication timing will depend on the volume of submissions and is the decision of The Spectator's editorial board.

Publication dates may not be reserved in advance. The later the submission, the higher the risk we will be unable to publish due to space limitations.

Please send submissions to letters@thespec.com.

Doug Conley is a candidate for Ward 9 councillor for Hamilton city council.

Rub a dub dub. One man in a tub

How my Friday night indulgence has me taking a bath on a reno



PAUL BENEDETTI

Last Friday I was taking my usual Friday night bubble bath, which consists of one part dish soap (for the bubbles), one part Axe Body Wash (any flavour will do, but I find Vice particularly repellent) and one part cold beer.

I drink the beer. I tried the Axe once, but it tastes worse than it smells.

My wife happened to saunter in unnoticed (the bathroom door hangs by one hinge and the lock only just recently broke, and by recently I mean sometime in early April) and said, “Good God, it smells like someone smashed a cologne bottle in a brewer. What the heck is going on around here?”

“It's the dish soap,” I said, quickly submerging two or three empty beer cans in the sudsy tub.

“No, it's not, it's the Axe. It's for boys and young men, not old geezers like you,” she said, in that gentle, loving way she has. “I don't know how high school teachers can take it.”

“Yes, I read recently that the combination of a dozen teenage boys simultaneously wearing it caused a teacher to pass out and the room to spontaneously burst into flames,” I said, rising from the tub.

“You might want to lay off the apple fritters for a while,” she said, eyeing me as I vigorously towelled off. “And what's that odd looking rash on your back?”

I twisted around to look in the mirror, lost my balance and momentarily crashed into the towel rack. I recovered nicely and did indeed observe a strange abrasion on my lower extremity.

“You've got a red bum,” noted my wife, scientifically.

“Could it be something I ate — or drank?” I said, glancing at the empty beer cans now visible in the drained tub.

“It's the bathtub,” said my wife, glumly. “It's so old, the enamel has worn off and you're scraping your bum on the bottom.”



This was a perfectly good tub — a mere three or four decades new.

I thought, that's impossible. This was a perfectly good tub — a mere three or four decades new — and in tip top shape. It hardly leaked at all.

“Think of it as a natural exfoliator,” I said. Hopefully. “You don't have to use all those fancy body scrubs. You just get in the tub and shimmy back and forth a bit.”

“Right,” she said. “And what about the shower?”

It was true that we were experiencing some trouble with the shower. I wish I was making this up, but lately the button you press in to activate the shower has been malfunctioning. In short, the “flange” or perhaps it's the “sprocket” — what do these names really even mean? — was slipping, with the result that water would simultaneously come out the spout, spray out the shower head and shoot out from the wall directly into your midsection.

“Listen,” I said. “People pay a lot of money for this kind of full body shower.”

“You're insane,” she replied evenly and then uttered the words I was hoping not to hear before we shuffled off to a retirement home. “I want a new bathroom.”

“No,” I said, spraying just a hint of Axe on me post-bath and triggering a paroxysm of coughing that only lasted a quarter hour. “Not a new bathroom. Please. The bank said if the mortgage gets any bigger, we'll have to put up one of the kids as collateral.”

Ignoring me, she began walking around outlining her ideas. Oddly, my head still spinning from the coughing, I could only hear the sound of cash registers ringing as she spoke.

“... and we can break through this wall into Ella's room and put in a full shower and oversized bath.”

“Break into Ella's room! Her bed's not even cold yet and you're taking over our only daughter's bedroom?”

“Relax, she won't even notice. And her room will still be much larger than a train compartment once we're done. It'll be cosy,” she said, pacing around with a tape measure.

At this point, I may have passed out momentarily — it could have been the Axe, or the beer — and when I awoke, I was strapped into the front seat of our car on the way to several outlets I can only remember as Hate & Harrow and Bed, Bath and Be-fuddled.

If you see me, ignore the rash and please don't light a match in my vicinity. That body spray takes a while to wear off.

Paul Benedetti lives in Hamilton. He teaches journalism at Western University.

The dangers of too many cats

I'll be looking for new boxers if Mrs. Princess learns new tricks



THOMAS FROESE

KAMPALA, UGANDA Back in Africa, I'm not overly worried about Ebola on the other side of the continent or even al-Shabaab terror cells like the one just busted in a slum here in Uganda's capital — 19 Somali suspects were arrested.

I'm worried more about my underwear. They could soon all be taken by my daughter and her cats.

I realize this may be disturbing to read with your morning coffee, but I assure you it's no less troubling to write about such a family conspiracy, that is if you consider our growing gaggle of animals, cats specifically, as family.

We recently returned to our East African home to find our one young feline, Mrs. Princess, had birthed a couple of kittens. While we were still unpacking, her sister, Mister Bubbles — yes, “Mister” is a she — pushed out four more. This, one night in a cardboard box just two feet from Zak, our mammoth, long-haired German shepherd who sleeps at the back door.

Candy is our troubled tomcat, a playboy rarely around even for holidays but now home as the dotting father. We've also accumulated some rabbits and you know what rabbits do. Add the wild monkeys running around and the tortoise my son wants and it's a regular funny farm around here.

Now when I was a boy the annual family Christmas photo always included our cats. Also, I'm the sort of father who reads my children Narnia, that magical place where nothing would happen if it weren't for the animals that talk and are led by that formidable, but gentle cat, Aslan, a lion who's creator and redeemer and general mysterious force.

Even so, all these cats are now making my own home one of those clear and present dangers.

To clarify, my underwear are in question because, in my foolish fatherly pride, I bet my entire supply that my daughter, Liz, could never-ever

teach any cat to come and sit and shake a paw. Zak barely does this and he's known for his sharp wits while protecting us.

Yes, before Zak, over the years in Africa we were robbed of various goods worth thousands of dollars. That includes my boy's underwear, once ripped off the clothesline by Ugandan children who'd never make the sort of bet I've just made with Liz.

She's 11, by the way, young, but sly, and she somehow already has Mrs. Princess coming and sitting. Apparently now it's just the paw-shaking to nail down. This, with the help of training material my daughter managed to bring from our local Pet Smart in Ancaster.

Uganda, as you might imagine, doesn't have big box stores for pets. Here a big box is what Ugandans ask for when some newly arrived expatriates empty their moving goods. I can also tell you that if you're a pet in Africa, you're not as worried about Ebola or terror as much as getting flattened on some old road and left to rot like the dead deer on Michigan's I-69.

This is one of the starkest differences between African and Canadian life. Parts of Africa have a growing middle class, sure, but if you're a common pet you won't find a Milk Bone, never mind training pads or any other paraphernalia now filling Canadian pet stores called “smart.”

I'm just waiting for such smart-stores to open their book section so freshly manicured and blow-dried Fifi can sip a latte while reading some best-seller about how to deal with her sexual anxieties. This, the result of the activists who insist that every dog, so-to-speak, deserves its day, its rights and its dignity and, well, a passenger airline seat, too.

In either case, I'm now working hard to minimize the cat count and keep my backside covered. One kitten's already been given to a Ugandan friend. And, since he happened to be around, the vet fixed Mrs. Princess. Mister Bubbles is next. This kind Ugandan vet has even assured me that he can find good homes for her four kittens. Imagine.

And my beautiful daughter? She's now busy with other things, like, uh, school work. That just increased. To eight days a week.

Thomas Froese and his family recently returned from Hamilton to their African home. Read him at www.dailydad.net and www.thomasfroese.com.



BRIEFLY

Short and excerpted comments sent to letters@thespec.com

Allergies involve more than food

With all the talk in the media of food allergies, we should also be talking about allergies regarding insects.

Recently my daughter and four grandchildren went to Lawfield School play park. We were only there for a few minutes when a young boy, perhaps six or seven, started screaming he had been bitten. The boy had been stung by a wasp on the back of his ear; in a matter of minutes his ear began to swell. I told his mum he has to go to a medical centre. Last year, I got my first wasp bite. Overnight my hand looked like a lobster claw. It was truly frightening to see how fast one bite on this boy's ear swelled. HELEN GEER, HAMILTON

We should be at war with ISIS butchers

It is so easy to criticize American military intervention in Syria/Iraq from our position of peace and comfort. However, we must not forget that the UN security council's inaction in Rwanda led to genocide. As for President Barack Obama “ensuring a perpetual war,” as a recent letter writer stated, shouldn't we be at war with a movement that without a sliver of hesitation kills any people they deem to be infidels? The willingness of the Americans to take swift action is an answer to the prayers and cries of thousands of people running from ISIS butchers. By taking leadership through action, the Americans are providing hope that the children of those targeted by ISIS can even have a future. STEPHEN JENVEY, DUNDAS

Pensioners deserve honest treatment

Let us hope that if the wraps come off the secret deal Ottawa struck with U.S. Steel there may be definitive and honest treatment paid to the pensioners, creditors and others owed millions of dollars. If U.S. Steel is to be a credible participant in the eventual closure of the Canadian operation, it may be appropriate to commit to using the sale of the land to repay those worthy of a fair and just settlement. It can then walk away with its reputation intact as a responsible citizen with integrity that most Americans hold very high and leave us wanting to retain our continued friendship and trust of one another. PAUL GLADY, HAMILTON