

POINTS OF VIEW

THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

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Rules are rules — thankfully

A record million-dollar fine levied against Dundas optician Bruce Bergez and his wife Joanne sends a very strong message that provincial licensing legislation exists for a good reason and must be obeyed.

The fine and strict conditions ordering compliance with government regulations on prescribing and dispensing eyeglasses and contact lenses are also — as a lawyer who pressed the case said — a “vindication of people who run their businesses legally.”

Indeed, it was a vindication of the usefulness of regulation. Licensing and certification are part of what are called “regulatory environments” and they exist around dozens of occupations and professions, including almost the entire spectrum of health care, teaching, engineering, trades, law, accountancy and financial advice.

Those regulatory environments exist for a reason, whether licensed by government or self-regulated by professional bodies: To ensure that their members maintain set levels of training, practices, professional behaviour and ethics.

If that regulatory environment is not maintained, we don’t know who to trust to build our bridges, teach our children, wire our homes or look after our health.

With this ruling, record fine and list of conditions, Justice David Crane upheld the regulatory environment that is in place to protect the public. That can only be a good thing.

In other news — and at another point on the business-behaviour scale — a newcomer to Hamilton (and to Canada) is off to a good start.

Lowe’s home improvement chain, building a store in east Hamilton, found that one of its contractors had dumped fill — 131 truckloads of clean soil — illegally on a wetland.

The violation appears to be have been inadvertent but, regardless, Lowe’s accepted responsibility and ordered its contractor to remove the fill. Usually, the landowner is on the hook, but in this case Lowe’s immediately did the right thing — what a spokesperson described as “being a good corporate citizen and neighbour.”

That’s how to become part of a community.
Robert Howard

Price of integrity

Full marks to MP — and former federal cabinet minister — Michael Chong, for putting his principles ahead of his career prospects.

While many of his Conservative colleagues stewed over how to vote on their leader’s resolution recognizing Québécois as a nation within Canada, Chong quit his job as inter-governmental affairs minister (which includes the national unity file). He resigned because he wasn’t consulted about his government’s position, and because he could not personally support the concept he calls “ethnic nationalism.”

For years Canadians have agonized over how to characterize Quebec’s relationship with the rest of the country. The issue fuels angst, debate and fatigue, and it will be on view again this weekend when the federal Liberals select their next leader.

But in an era when many people are jaded about what they think motivates politicians, Chong responded with a clear and admirable statement this week, effectively saying his principles are worth more than the \$70,000 a year he’ll lose from a minister’s paycheque.
Kevin Cavanagh

Editorials are written by members of the editorial board. They represent the position of the newspaper, not necessarily the individual author.

Any start is good

Viewpoint: The Boston Globe

The ceasefire that began Sunday in Gaza will be subject to many perils and may not hold. The overdue offer of dialogue with the Palestinians that Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert extended Monday may prove little more than a political manoeuvre. Nonetheless, it is better to suspend violence than to let it continue, and far better to begin talking about peace than to go on speaking in the hopeless language of threats and vengeance.

Both sides have incentives to maintain the ceasefire. Both, and particularly the Palestinian population in Gaza, have been worn down by the pointless, circular pattern of violence.

Added to the weariness of the two peoples is the changing balance of forces in the surrounding region. Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia are increasingly anxious about the spread of Iranian influence into Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. Tehran’s backing for the Damascus-based leadership of the Palestinian movement Hamas is perceived by governments in Riyadh, Amman, and Cairo as presenting as much a threat to them as to Israel.

The longer the mayhem continues in Gaza, the easier it is for Islamists in Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia to depict regimes in those countries as dupes of Israel and pawns of Israel’s principal backer, the United States.

Perceptive Israelis realize the looming threat from al-Qaeda and like-minded jihadists means Israel and key Arab states share an interest in halting a descent into chaos that can only benefit their mutual enemies.

In his speech Monday, Olmert envisioned a path leading from the current ceasefire to “a real, open, genuine and serious dialogue.” In language that avoided mention of the sort of formal negotiation that the Israeli peace camp favours, Olmert addressed himself to the Palestinians, saying: “In the framework of this dialogue, and in accordance with the road map, you will be able to establish an independent and viable Palestinian state, with territorial contiguity” in the West Bank.

He left crucial issues undefined: how the land is to be divided; what happens to East Jerusalem; and what is to become of the Palestinian refugees. But if it signals an understanding that neither side can resolve the conflict by unilateral actions, Olmert’s offer of dialogue may become a first step toward the negotiated peace accord that Israelis, Palestinians, and their neighbours desperately need.

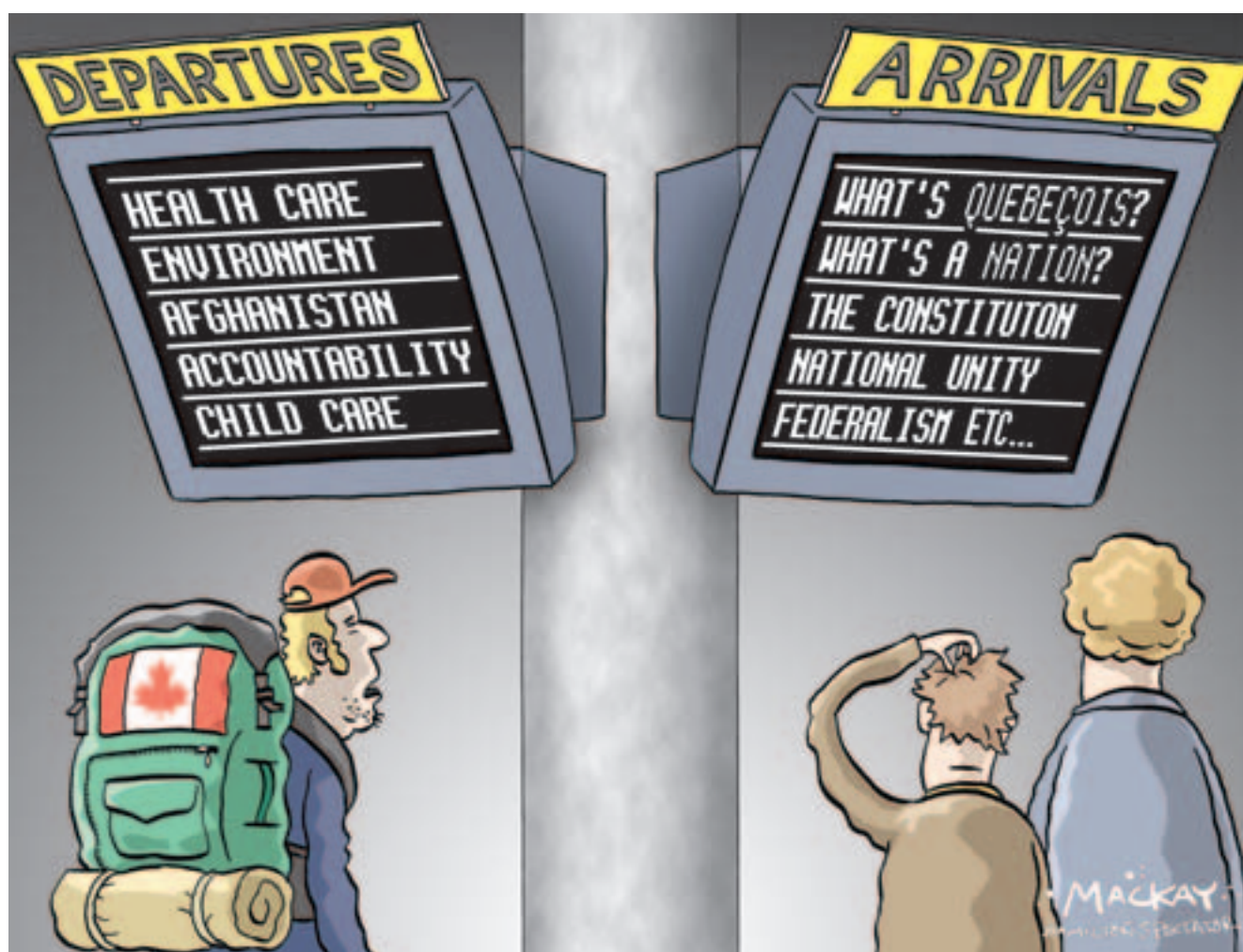
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Letters@thespec.com

Soldier promoted troops, not war

Re: ‘Westdale wrong to promote war’ (Letter, Nov. 20)

The assertions of the letter writer that Westdale Secondary School is promoting war are incorrect, hurtful and inappropriate.

The two teachers responsible for the assembly worked hard to bring students a service that was both engaging and informative. Recognizing their teenage audience could not likely connect with the aging veterans of a war they never experienced, the organizers decided to take a new approach. Instead of inviting an 80-year-old veteran of the Second World War to speak to students, they opted for a fresh-faced trooper out of Afghanistan. In addition to the list of school casualties from the Second World War, students would be shown a short biography and picture of each Canadian killed in the Afghan conflict.

The service garnered more attention and respect from Westdale students than I would have thought possible. It was interesting and educational, blending more traditional fare with contemporary material from today’s conflict. The speaker, a 21-year-old veteran of Afghanistan, transfixed the audience with his story of

war and loss, and his burning desire to return and finish a job he thoroughly believes in. Contrary to the letter writer’s accusations of promoting war, this soldier was simply promoting the troops, urging students to support the soldiers as they fight and die in a foreign country. Not once did he encourage audience members to enlist and serve in the Middle East; rather he called for them to defend what they believed in.

This is why I have written this letter, and I am neither driving a tank nor wielding a gun to do so. While there are many opinions concerning the legitimacy of the Afghanistan mission, the one thing Canadians can agree on is that supporting the troops is essential, regardless of whether one supports the cause.

If the letter writer was offended by the content or manner in which the service was conducted, she could have spoken to the teachers responsible privately. Taking her criticism into the public arena has resulted in a false, negative view of Westdale.

I hope this misunderstanding has not diminished the opinion of the public toward my school and my classmates.
— Fraser Caldwell, Hamilton

Time to define our role

Re: ‘Why are we in Afghanistan?’ (Opinion, Nov. 21)

Colonel (retired) Chris Corrigan states that “classical peacekeeping has evolved to peacemaking and the three-block war.”



Gibb

The facts do not support this claim. The UN cannot keep up with the record demand for blue-helmeted peacekeepers.

Classical peacekeeping is needed now more than ever. Despite the need for troops to fulfill these functions, Canada’s contributions are now at historic lows. All of Canada’s troops participating in UN peacekeeping missions could each find a seat on a single school bus.

Canada now ranks 61st on the list of countries providing troops to UN peacekeeping missions, immediately behind Burkina Faso, Denmark and Guinea. Our military, corporate and political leaders have actively chosen to turn away from classical peacekeeping.

We have been turned onto a path toward reorganization of the Canadian military with the unstated goal of integration with the American military. In military jargon this is called “interoperability.”

What it means for Canada is that we are one small but growing component in the U.S. military’s international projects.

For example, Canadians participated in the U.S.-led “Operation Enduring Freedom” in southern Afghanistan and are participating in the global “war on terror.”

Is this what Canadians want from their military? It’s time for a national debate about what role(s) we want our military to perform internationally. Only after this debate has developed can we begin to build the military that will meet a clearly defined set of needs.
— Euan Gibb, Hamilton

Intruder was hog-tied until police arrived

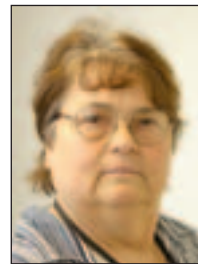
Re: ‘Police hope to end B&E review today’ (Nov. 24)

Some 50 years ago, with two teenage daughters in the house, my father apprehended an intruder who had lost his way.

He was at a party down the street and was so drunk he thought he was at the right house.

When he found the door locked, he tried to get in by breaking several windows and cutting himself.

We called the police, but living where we did it was going to take some time for the police to get to us and mom was worried the man would bleed to death.



Coulthard

My father, who was over 50, let the man in and hog-tied him. For those who don’t know what hog-tying is, it is to tie the thumbs together in front, sit the person down on the floor, arms over knees and shove a broom between the elbows and knees and then push this person over.

Mom bandaged his cuts and then we found out what he was doing at our house.

The police came and had a good laugh at what dad had done.

When the man sobered up in the drunk tank he asked who had bandaged him up. The guy came down later the next day and apologized for the damage and paid for the windows.

This was a man in his 30s, not a teenager.

It was not as easy as it sounds for my father to hog-tie him and our kitchen was covered in blood.
— Joan Coulthard, Hamilton

Anti-war protesters should target the politicians

Re: ‘War games hit the streets’ (Nov. 27)

I was annoyed to see anti-war protesters blocking soldiers’ training exercises.

Do they think soldiers are the ones who decided to send our troops to Afghanistan? All the protesters accomplish by blocking training is to ensure that when we send soldiers to fight, they arrive without having been able to train.

As the mother of a reservist I am familiar with how they must fit their training in around full-time jobs or

university life. Wasting time by having misguided individuals hold them up takes away from the safety that comes from proper training.

If anti-war protesters feel the need to demonstrate, would they please find the appropriate people to block — say the politicians who signed us up as part of the good guys.

You may not agree with our mission in Afghanistan, but please allow our soldiers to train. Direct your protests to where it won’t harm the men and women who have the courage to make the world a better place.
— Kim Capson, Ancaster

Too much attention paid to Justin Trudeau

My goodness, two photos of Justin Trudeau in the front section in the last few days.

What has this young man done to warrant such attention? If his last name were anything but Trudeau

would you be featuring him so prominently? There would be more value in providing readers with a photo of the leadership candidates rather than that of a minor Liberal celebrity.
— Lidija Deme, Burlington