

LETTERS

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Thanks for the support

An open letter to Mayor Rick Bonnette

Dear Mayor Bonnette: Happy Spring Equinox! Change is upon us...

Please accept this letter of appreciation. Through you, Mayor Rick, I wish to express my profound gratitude for the support I have received since the fall of 2016 from Town of Halton Hills departments and staff. As you may recall, I had experienced a life-changing

event just over a year and a half ago. In mid-June 2016, I was involved in a near fatal head-on car collision.

The good folks at Activan—dispatch and drivers alike—have been a delight to interact with. I am often taken to the Hillview Active Living Centre where Terri, Sherry, and Kim oversee the outstanding programs available there. I especially enjoy my time with the QiGong gang, which is led by

our awesome instructor Jill. I have been attending the AcquaFit classes at the Gellert Centre, where participants are encouraged to work hard but at their own pace. I could never have come so far so quickly had I not been supported by staff at both these locations. My brain also gets a good work out with the use of our beautiful Library facilities; and when I can't get out to the library, the Books-on-Wheels service has been invaluable.

I must also give honourable mention to Georgetown B2C

who reached out to support my family in the early days; as well as my good friends at Halton Hills Chamber of Commerce; and fellow members of Georgetown Highland Games Organizing Committee; and several local private businesses such as the super folks at McCab Taxi Service, CircaFit, BAO Fitness and most impactful in my recovery - my dedicated Physiotherapy team at Ross Physio.

Mayor Rick, I can never repay my debt of gratitude for all the mental, physical and

emotional support given to me by the fine folks in our community and Town staff in particular. Each in their own way has played a tremendous part in my bounce-back journey to recovery.

Any successful organizational culture cascades from the top. The efforts made on my behalf by your collaborative and compassionate staff prove this adage to be true. Thanks to all involved!

With appreciation and respect,
Tim Dixon

SPORTS TALK

The German machine

Did you know Kitchener, Ontario used to be known as Berlin until 1916? The original Berlin, for those with a bit of interest in geography, is Germany's capital as well as its largest city—it is also a soccer power house. It goes without saying that most of the early European settlers in Kitchener came from Germany. The name change happened as a result of World War II.

The German national team also known as Die Mannschaft—German for “The Team”—is one of the most successful teams in world soccer across all age groups, men or women.

They will be arriving at the 2018 World Cup in Russia as most neutrals' favorites. They are currently ranked number one in the world, and until their very recent 1-0 loss to Brazil on March 27, they had not lost in 23 games going as far back as the Euro 2016 semi-finals against France.

Under the tutelage of the unassuming Joachim Low, the Germans thrashed host Brazil at the last world cup in 2014 by seven goals to one—on the way to becoming the first European team to win the tournament on South American soil. They were also losing finalists in 1982, 1986 and 2002. They hold the record for most world cup final game appearances with eight—four won, four lost—which is a

By
Michael Oke

better record than Brazil, who have seven final game appearances in total.

Much has been said about the German Football Association's youth development program. The main recipe for their success in my opinion is a combination of their history—experience—coupled with mental toughness and organization on the field of play. German teams traditionally never give up and tend to play a very efficient style of play—hence the nickname “German machine”—that emphasizes ball movement and possession with as little flair as possible. This explains why the most notable German players, past and present, are better known for their strong technical know-how.

Their domestic professional league—Bundesliga—also provides the much-needed conveyor belt of talent to guarantee continued success in years to come.

With four World Cup titles—three as West Germany—and currently the defending champions, they have traditionally qualified for the knock out stages of World Cups they have qualified for, and they should be able to overcome Mexico, Sweden and South Korea in Group F of the Russia 2018 with games on June 17, 23 and 27. Probably a good time to visit Kitchener if you have friends and family there.

JUST A THOUGHT

The cost of free



By
Trish Bell

Free is a funny word. It has a power over us that few words can match. It can conjure up a whole host of ideals that, while neither realistic nor valid, drive us just the same. I mean who amongst us doesn't love the idea of something for nothing? Yet, while we love the idea of free, we also must admit that nothing is truly free. Even when it costs us nothing to obtain an item or service, you can bet your bottom dollar, someone else had to pay so that it could even be offered up to us “free of charge.” Be it the effort, time, or materials, every item or service requires someone to pony up. Let's face it: free doesn't really mean there was no cost.

When a store—or political party—advertises a free item, make no mistake; someone is footing the bill. Stores often forfeit in the hopes that small losses will inevitably lead to later—and greater—returns. Sometimes free happens on condition: the consumer must buy one—at full price—to get one free, or perhaps pay the shipping or taxes. Such schemes hope that for minimal loss, the business will, in turn, generate foot traffic, sales and revenue. These tactics are well used because—like a fly to butter—people can consistently be counted on to flock to free. In fact, studies—and many a sales gimmick—have shown our brains are actually predisposed to love the feeling of getting something au gratis. Marketing and public relations gurus spend vast amounts to obtain every piece of research on the subject so that they might better advise companies on how best to use your own feelings to separate you from your hard-earned dollars. But don't kid yourself; these same

tactics, when used by political parties have one crucial difference; namely that when political parties utter the word free, they are never the ones covering the costs.

With a provincial election now just two months away, it is no surprise that the free campaign is entering high gear. Promises of free daycare, free drugs, free dental care, free homecare, free post-secondary tuition are flooding newsfeeds daily, and the list goes on and on. Yet, the harsh reality is that we are not financially in good standing and none of these things—including our existing “free” education and “free” healthcare systems—are actually free. But we will pay for such programs, whether we want them or even benefit from them. We will pay in our taxes and will watch them rise to accommodate such costs. Our province will pay in lost revenues that become directed towards only minimum payments on interest owed to others, limited our ability to climb out of such economic dependence. And our children will pay as we leave them \$308 billion plus in debt; a debt that will likely see them pay more than they should for free programs long since closed or unavailable to them. Clearly, free isn't, and while we might think we are getting free something for nothing, perhaps we should stop to ask ourselves if the cost is truly worth the sudden gratification?

Yet, despite all the evidence

we should avoid promises of free, particularly in political contexts, why do we still appear to swarm the word? Why do we allow already vastly indebted governments to tempt us further down the rabbit hole? Why do we buy this classic propaganda scheme when governments and parties vie for our votes? Some would argue because we only care about ourselves. People crave the feeling of something for nothing—even if only up front. As anyone who has ever bought on loan or credit can tell you, later is almost always more expensive, and yet our love of getting something can override even the most prudent common financial sense. Look at all those useless freebies we accumulate from trade shows and hotels; keychains, magnets, pens, mini bottles of shampoo: we know the companies have likely paid for them and we likely neither needed or wanted them, but because they were there and they were free, we happily snatched them up like Gollum and his precious. Heck, even employers now build in the cost of stolen office supplies as a work perk, knowing that it is a useful tool in retaining satisfied employees. So, while we know free isn't really free, it clearly fills a feel-good void all the same. And this leaves us all in a dangerous spot, because as we enter a year of multiple election campaigns—we need to remind ourselves of the costs of free. Like the drugs that will be “free” of legal ramifications quite soon, free is an unnatural high and it is important that we exercise our use—and abuse—of free with caution. Because, whether we admit it or not, free just isn't.

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