

# LETTERS

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## “The most patriotic town in Canada”

To the editor,

The recent NAFTA negotiations with our biggest trading partner have led to a new round of protectionism imposed by our “best friends” south of the border. This is nothing new.

After President Obama’s first visit to Ottawa in 2009,

and having declared Canada his best friend, he immediately signed a bill which imposed “Buy America” on federal, state and local purchasing. The impact was immediate. Hundreds of manufacturers across Canada who shipped into the US were hurt. Local Halton companies like Hayward Valve

and GE were injured.

It was Mayor Rick Bonette and Councillor Clark Somerville, with the help of elected officials in Halton Region, who pushed back. They were unapologetically vocal about how “fair trade needs to go both ways”.

Their efforts were suc-

cessful. Canada won an “exemption” to “Buy America”. Thousands of jobs were restored across the country.

The same Mayor and Councillor are valiantly trying to protect Canada today. I see them everywhere on the media, warning about poison of protectionism and talking about the benefits of fair trade. Their message is loud and clear—more trade is good—

less trade is bad—for both Canadians and Americans.

I now know why Halton Hills is affectionately dubbed “the most patriotic town in Canada”—because its leaders love their town and the country and fearlessly act to protect it.

Thank you. Know we appreciate it.

Ves Sobot, P.Eng.  
Burlington, ON

## SPORTS TALK

### Video Assistant Referee (VAR)

The new buzzword in the world of soccer at the moment is VAR—the acronym for



By  
**Michael Oke**

Video Assistant Referee system. This is due to the recent adoption of support technology which comprises human, instant replay and other video technologies to assist referees at the ongoing World Cup. The system will be used for contentious decisions like the award of penalty kicks, players getting sent off for any infringement during play, or disputed goals scored.

Apparently, soccer is just catching up to what has long been part and parcel of officiating in almost all major sports. However, there are times when these technologies haven’t necessarily helped dispel controversy. The 52nd Super Bowl between the Philadelphia Eagles and New England Patriots earlier this year comes to mind.

It goes without saying that the speed at which athletes or balls—be it tennis, football, soccer or hockey pucks, for that matter—move, is way too fast for the normal human eye to capture critical moments during the course of a game. Hence the requirement for an additional pair of eyes, or technology, becomes a no-brainer.

Soccer’s global governing body FIFA had been reluctant to bring in technology due to concerns it would have a negative impact on the flow and pace of the game as well as the cost associated with introducing the

system to all member countries. FIFA prides itself with presiding over a game that has a low cost of adoption and with uniform rules worldwide.

Going back to the World Cup, there have been some rather contentious decisions in past editions, one example is the fact that many Germans still feel one of the 1966 World Cup final goals scored by Geoff Hurst of England never crossed the line and perhaps the English “stole” their solitary World Cup win when they hosted the event that year.

Talking about England and the World Cup, the VAR system did not pick up clear manhandling of their captain and star player, Harry Kane, in their first game against Tunisia. Such was the uproar that the VAR system went into overdrive and they got not one, but two penalties in the second game against Panama who they ultimately demolished 6-1 when it was all said and done.

The Serbians were unfortunately on the other side of the VAR system when a blatant foul by two Swiss defenders on their striker Mitrovic went without any penalty decision.

There are certainly many examples in sports where the use of video assistance or instant replay has led to referees’ decisions getting overturned or confirmed. This is obviously a good thing and needs to be expanded further.

## JUST A THOUGHT

### The thorns of trade



By  
**Trish Bell**

Every time I steal away a minute to pull weeds in my yard, which—quite frankly—I should do much more often for the sake of my neighbours, I am reminded of all the mistakes I have made as an amateur gardener. I can’t help but think about the hordes of plants I have eagerly welcomed home, only to find my less than green thumb has done them in. Yet—and to my astonishment—some of my experiments survive. My reduced-to-clear crab-apple tree, for example, thrives. Once lop-sided and near death, it is now strong and tall, full of fruit and flowers for the birds and bees. Yet, because of that success, my feathered friends have inadvertently sowed some plants of their own right below its branches, including some simply nasty scotch thistles that, despite my best intentions, seem to grow with a vengeance. Now, I do not begrudge the birds or the tree, as I know this is how things sometimes go, but I would be lying if I said I was grateful for the massive prickly plants I must now wrestle out of my rock garden. Clearly, there can be unforeseen and unintended consequences to every action, even the most noble, as any gardener who has ever planted mint can attest. In some ways the old saying, “just because you can doesn’t mean you should” might very well be the gardener’s creed. And considering our current position in the current trade war predicament, Canada might think about such a slogan too. After all, we do not have to trade globally and the unintended consequences have left us rather vulnerable.

Now, that is not to say that we should be naive about how our current economy is set up, merely a bit more honest about how the whole operation works. First of all, trade is nothing new to Canada.

Even the Hudson Bay Trading Company—you know, that department store with the iconic blanket—was trading beaver pelts back in the 1600s so that every well-to-do Englishman could have a smashing hat to show off his status. From the very beginning, trade for Canada has usually been about making deals for someone else. Even having Quebec retain its French identity was part of a trade deal between England and France over access to the Caribbean trade routes, so it is not unprecedented for Canadians to trade for standing on the world stage. However, we appear to be have become locked into this game and it is currently costing us. Canada imports far more than it exports, leaving us with a nasty trade deficit of about \$24 billion in 2016. Our number one export is cars, followed by crude petroleum and then car parts. Sounds about right, except our top imports are cars, car parts and refined petroleum, too, begging the question, why import and export the same things? Think of the pollution and waste—not to mention costs—of importing and exporting similar products over and over again. I mean how many tankers are polluting the ocean—using fuel themselves—as they transport this stuff back and forth. It is the modern-day equivalent of Europeans trekking the long and dangerous silk road to buy spices in the east that they were trying to sell from the gardens in the west. What’s worse, the products we are rich in, that should find their way to international markets, struggle to get a toe in. Sure, some trade deals have

opened up some markets, but they have also seen our farmers and manufacturing firms toil to compete effectively on the world stage. Such deals forget that companies lose protections and guaranteed markets, making their costs like raw materials and labour incredibly dependant on competitiveness, not necessarily fair in today’s global game. While we attempt to consider the environmental impact of our harvest and the working conditions of our people, other nations do not, making the playing field tilted precariously to our disadvantage, economically speaking. In addition, it leads these companies to outsource materials and offshore jobs, helping other economies more than our own.

So, the question isn’t whether Canada can compete on the world market, but should it? Should any nation be so vastly dependent that it can be hindered by the choices of an outside influence? Is there really a need for trade when you can and do make it yourself? Is it right that our governments argue an environmental protection agenda while simultaneously ensuring our dependence on all the things we know hurt our planet, and then tax us for it? Is it even possible to separate ourselves now from the global economy? It might be worth a look. Because while we make deals and counter-deals, we forget no country can take care of our Canada like Canadians. Sure, it’s nice to be part of the global cool club but when it comes down to it, the more you can do independently, the better you do for your own people. Call it nationalism if you want, but when I finally get rid of those pesky thistles, you can bet I’ll do something to prevent them coming back. Seems like common sense to me.

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