

# The Chronicle-Journal

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## Leaders need to hear what science says

**A**MONG the many ignominious events of Donald Trump's eventful presidency, one in particular will likely stand out when political historians catalogue the highs and the lows.

In modern memory, surely last week was the first time a major chemical manufacturer had to formally advise consumers against ingesting one of its products — Lysol in this case — lest they take to heart the misguided musings of a U.S. president.

Britain's Reckitt Benckiser issued the bulletin after Trump said out loud, in the presence of aghast public health officials, that a disinfectant routinely used to wipe down bathrooms and kitchen counters might also be effective inside the human body, in terms of a potential preventative measure against the corona virus.

Reckitt Benckiser was unequivocal: that is not a good thing to do. In the wake of the inevitable blow-back, which led to the president's friends and foes alike undoubtedly wondering if he had been sniffing oven-cleaner fumes, Trump insisted he was being sarcastic when he stated that while he is not a physician, he has a good brain. Neither notion — that the president was in fact uttering sarcasm, nor that he comes up with ideas worthy of genius — is convincing.

Trump is not the first politician, nor will he be the last, to find science, and scientists in particular, an annoyance and a hindrance against their political agendas.

Former Canadian prime minister Stephen Harper infamously muzzled federal scientists when he found their findings inconvenient. And during last year's election campaign, current Prime Minister Justin Trudeau exasperated climatologists everywhere by using two jumbo jets instead of just one, global warming be damned. Here in Ontario, Northern Development and Mines Minister Greg Rickford appeared to be a climate-change denier, until he clarified — we suspect on orders from Premier Doug Ford's office — that he wasn't.

But Trump has been particularly adept at throwing caution to the wind, flagrantly thumbing his nose at scientists by insisting that global warming is a "hoax" — a nefarious plot to undermine him. Earlier this year, he wrongly predicted, against scientific evidence to the contrary, that COVID-19 would not impact the United States in a significant way, thereby seriously misleading his fellow Americans and Canadians as well. Trump also said the U.S. economy would be back in high gear by Easter, which was ridiculous even without the benefit of hindsight.

Scientists warned that the virus had the potential to become a global pandemic, and it did. Scientists have said all along that a reduction in industrial carbon emissions — currently a result of lockdowns imposed in the wake of the coronavirus — would clear the air, notably in Los Angeles and in major cities in China and India. They were right about that.

In a story carried by this newspaper last week, the Associated Press reported the following: "On April 3, residents of Jalandhar, a city in north India's Punjab, woke up to a view not seen for decades — snow-capped Himalayan peaks more than 100 kilometres away."

Seeing is believing, but listening is important too. As we continue to navigate our way through this pandemic, politicians must keep their eyes and ears wide open, particularly when scientists are stating the obvious.



## There will always be newcomers

BY MIRIAM WALL

**I**AM in the midst of reading an interesting book called *A History of Canada in Ten Maps*, by Adam Shoalts. Its opening chapter describes the explorations of the Vikings, who, after establishing settlements in Greenland and Iceland (already far from their original home in Scandinavia), they set off in small boats, to explore "Vinland" in northern Labrador.

This was in the 10th century. Long before then, Indigenous people had already travelled and settled in various parts of Canada. Subsequent chapters of the book describe the further movement of people, especially from the east (France, and other countries in Europe), and the south (including the mighty Iroquois).

All were prompted by a sense of adventure and, the settlers who followed them, by dreams of a better life, and more opportunity. It gave me pause to reflect that the movement of people across great distances is a characteristic of human life itself, and it has happened for centuries.

All of us have come from somewhere else, if we go back far enough.

And so here we are, in 2020, in Thunder Bay.

How different the profile of our city is, from even 10 years ago — never mind 50. Between the college



ONE CITY, MANY VOICES

**Thunder Bay's Anti-Racism and Respect Committee and Diversity Thunder Bay produce this monthly column to promote greater understanding of race relations in Northwestern Ontario.**

and the university, there are more than 3,500 international students studying here. A large majority hope to stay in Canada after graduation and many would like to stay in Thunder Bay, if they can find meaningful employment.

Their motivation for coming to Canada is no different than that of people in the 17th, 18th or 19th century. They dream of better prospects, a good life for themselves and their families, a chance to make a difference. For many international students, Canada is seen as a land of opportunity, vast spaces, cold temperatures and, in the words of some, "heaven on earth."

Not everyone will achieve their dreams. Many, like their predecessors, will find the road to be filled

with challenges and difficulties. Some will decide to return home. But others will stay, work hard, contribute to our community and — like the many immigrants before them — make a good life for themselves and their families.

Sure, we will have to get used to different names (Pasquale and Jari will be joined by Bhavya, Yuan-chao and Ade), but we can do that. We always have, and will continue to, just like the Ojibway, the French, the English, the Italians, and the Finns before us.

So what do the next 50 years hold for Thunder Bay? How will its map change? What stamp will newcomers make on its economy, its politics, its cultural make up? Only time will tell. But if the book I am reading is any guide, the map of our lovely city will continue to evolve and change and grow . . . which is a whole lot better and more exciting than the alternative.

*Miriam Wall grew up in Ireland. She never intended to emigrate and had never heard of Thunder Bay before leaving Ireland. However, as is the case for some who end up in far-flung places, matters of the heart led her to Canada, and to our city. She works at Confederation College, in the international education department. The views and opinions expressed in this column are those of the author.*

## Diversity of views

We take pride in our letters section as a forum for sharing diverse views. We know there are a wide range of opinions on a variety of topics and believe strongly that our community is best served when all opinions are exposed, considered and discussed.

Letters kept to 300 words have priority and may be edited for space, style, accuracy and clarity. Letters must be the original work of the author and be exclusive to The Chronicle-Journal. Please cite page and date for articles mentioned. Letters may appear on our website. There is no restriction on the frequency of letters.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### 'Sarcasm' may explain more comments

**I**RECENTLY watched the press conference where President Trump made a jaw-dropping remark regarding the possibility of injecting disinfectant into the human body to cure the COVID-19 virus. His remarkable comment was later walked back as having been "sarcasm."

I sincerely hope that the same can be said of Mr. Theodoropoulos's comment published in your Letters Page (*Trump Performance Worthy of Monument — letter, April 25*).

Allister Ogilvie  
SIOUX LOOKOUT

### Trump has proven himself incompetent

**P**OOOR Tom Theodoropoulos (*Trump Performance Worthy of Monument — letter, April 25*) and the other dozen or so people of local Trump acolytes who obviously spend far too much time with their eyes glued to Fox News with their mouths agape as they are inundated with Trump, Trump, and more Trump.

Compare, for a moment, Trump's daily lie-fest with what Prime Minister Justin Trudeau delivers every morning to the Canadian people: honesty and effusive, heartfelt praise for first responders and hospital staffs.

On the other hand, the Trump Show is all about him, with regular broadsides about his critics, which are legion. Hmm, I wonder why that is?

Aside from the fawning foolishness that your letter is lavishly sprinkled with, I really have to take umbrage at your comment 'there's no reason to doubt he will be

equally competent, and successful . . .'

Really Tom, competent? Trump is the most incompetent president, ever!

Paul Joy  
THUNDER BAY

### Vaccines work for all when used widely

**T**HE World Health Organization and its partners sponsor World Immunization Week (April 24-30 this year) to promote the use of vaccines to protect all people from disease. It is also intended to celebrate the workers who deliver these vaccines often under very difficult conditions. The 2020 campaign is particularly salient as we all wait in fear for a vaccine to end the COVID-19 pandemic.

I was born in 1952 in the midst of Canada's worst polio epidemic. Poliomyelitis is a virus that can infect people of all ages — mainly targeting young children — and paralyzed 11,000 Canadians between 1949 and 1954. The Salk vaccine was developed in 1955 and the Sabin oral vaccine in 1962. Canadian investment in the research, development and evaluation of both vaccines was significant. The widespread immunization that followed led to Canada being declared "polio free" by 1994.

I remember the big needles used for the Salk vaccine; indeed, the biggest boy in Grade 4 knocked his desk over when he fainted after getting a booster shot. My generation grew up aware of polio victims who walked the rest of their life using forearm crutches, and even children who grew to adulthood living in iron lungs in Canadian hospitals.

The member states of the World Health Organization (WHO) created the Global Po-

lio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) in 1988 with a view to ending this crippling disease in all nations through immunization programs that reach children everywhere. The initiative is supported by a number of public and private sector partners including donor governments, the WHO, UNICEF, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Rotary International, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and so on.

Even though the aim at the outset was to eradicate polio by the year 2000, the GPEI has been largely successful in that cases decreased from an estimated 350,000 in 1988 to 94 new cases in 2019. The disease is still found in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nigeria. Until it is completely gone (like smallpox), polio will continue to be viewed as a public health emergency.

I am also old enough to remember people who had tuberculosis (TB) which continues to kill more than 4,000 people every day for a total of 1.5 million each year. It is endemic in poorer and populous nations in Africa and Asia and is more deadly than other infectious diseases. The infection rate in Canada is now very low, but it is still found in northern Indigenous communities and among some visitors to our country.

In the 1950s, TB was more prevalent throughout Canada. My aunt contracted TB while working for the CN Telegraph in Churchill, Man., and had to stay for some time at the Lakehead Sanatorium (the "San") where family could not visit her. As a teenager and young adult, I had to have X-rays before working in restaurants because my family member once had TB.

I was the only one in my family to have measles as a child, which was also my first experience with social and physical distancing. I remember feeling pretty sorry for myself once I began to feel better as my mother kept me isolated from everyone. I recall

the neighbourhood kids showing up one day outside my parent's bedroom window to cheer me up. I had my nose pressed to the screen as they stood in a group about two metres away chattering happily.

With the development of a vaccine in the 1960s followed by universal immunization programs, measles was declared eliminated in Canada by 1998. There are still outbreaks from time to time, usually when Canadian children who have not been vaccinated travel to countries where this highly contagious disease is still common.

There should be no excuse not to protect all children with the MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine but it is not always available in poorer nations. Organizations like Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance (with many of the same partners as GPEI with whom they work) is changing the situation and has immunized more than 760 million children in the last 20 years, preventing more than 13 million deaths.

Canada's Minister of International Development, Karina Gould, has stated loudly and clearly that COVID-19 will not be defeated until it has been defeated everywhere, and that Canada "will continue to work with our international partners to address this pandemic."

Minister Gould has announced \$159.5 million in Canadian aid to fight COVID-19 abroad, but more is needed to make sure the other communicable diseases are not forgotten. Canada needs to fund GPEI and Gavi directly, to both help with COVID-19 and ensure the stability of existing immunization programs.

No one wants to go back to a time when parents were terrified that their children would be paralyzed by polio, seriously ill from measles, or suffering from TB.

Sherry Moran  
OTTAWA