

A14

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EDITORIALS

Freedom of Trade
Liberty of Religion
Equality of Civil Rights

EDITORIAL



Izzy's Way will be easy to find

WINNIPEG'S city council will soon be asked to consider a request to rename a portion of Waterfront Drive in honour of the late Izzy Asper, one of the city's great citizens who was responsible for at least \$100 million in funding being poured into the community through his foundation, corporate donations and personal gifts.

Mr. Asper was also the visionary who developed the idea for the Canadian Museum for Human Rights and who secured federal support for the project in the early years of its development. The museum is probably his single greatest contribution to Winnipeg and the nation, so it is only right and fitting that the street in front of the towering edifice bears his name.

It should be a simple decision, despite the fact the city doesn't like to rename city streets, particularly if it involves changing an existing historic name, or if the change would cause an expense to businesses that would be required to change their letterheads. Other considerations include safety issues — name changes can be a problem for emergency services — and GPS systems also depend on reliable and consistent street names.

None of these concerns are relevant in this case, however, because there are no businesses on Waterfront Drive in The Forks and the existing name is relatively new. Nor would police or firefighters have any trouble finding Izzy Asper Way, directly in front of the museum.

The museum's CEO, Stuart Murray, requested the name change last May, but the wheels of city hall have been slow to turn. The delay means there probably will not be enough time for a name-changing ceremony on Oct. 7, the 10th anniversary of his death.

The request appears to have been delayed because the city prefers to use honorary name changes, similar to the installation of Mahatma Gandhi Way on York Avenue between Main Street and Waterfront Drive.

That was an appropriate decision for a variety of reasons, including the fact York is a historic name, but a mere honorary title for Mr. Asper would be an insult to his legacy.

Winnipeg is one of the few major cities that names streets after its outstanding citizens — mayors, premiers, long-serving councillors, philanthropists and business people. The names Bannatyne, Ashdown, Luxton, Garry, Donald, Smith and Hargrave all stem from this tradition of paying tribute to the people who made a difference or played an important role in the life and success of the city.

Most cities use a numbered system, which may be a lot more convenient. Winnipeg tried that method briefly in the 1890s, but eventually decided it preferred a city with character. It got rid of the numbers and reinstalled the old names.

Mr. Asper's name already adorns numerous buildings and institutions in Winnipeg, but there has been no official recognition of his importance since his death.

His contributions, moreover, are not relegated to the past, as was the case with so many of the people whose names are remembered on street signs. The Asper Foundation, which he created in 1983, is one of the largest private foundations in Canada. It hands out millions of dollars every year, including \$100,000 to the United Way.

His children, Leonard, David and Gail, have also carried on the tradition and each manages their own private foundations on behalf of the community.

In that sense, Izzy Asper is the gift that keeps on giving, and will in perpetuity, since the Asper Foundation was established as a permanent institution. As he told his children before his death, the foundation was to be regarded as his fourth child.

Renaming a street is not enough, but there will be time for more honours in the future.

For now, rather than delaying the process, city council should consider how it can speed it up in time for a major announcement on Oct. 7.

HARPER, BAIRD SHOW SKILL IN SYRIAN CRISIS...



WIFE... CINDY HOARD
artisans.com

Photo offensive

Does the picture on the front page of the *Free Press* Sept. 19 of two men kissing offend me? Absolutely not.

Does the picture below it, of two men beating on each other in front of our children for huge salaries offend me? More than a little.

DENISE LINTOTT
Winnipeg

With regard to your question on the front page showing two men kissing and the question "Does this offend you?" I believe this is the wrong question to ask.

Such a question would seem to be as misguided as psychologist Karen Blair's attempt at a research project, presumably directed at answering this question. I, like most people I have encountered, are usually not "offended" by the sight of two men kissing or by homosexuality in general. Most people seem to readily admit in private, however, that such images tend to inexplicably cause a visceral revulsion at a deep level. This seems especially so with regard to men's perceptions and reactions to male homosexuality.

It is this misguided way of thinking that seems to be at the root of the so-called "homophobia" phenomenon. The term homophobia would seem to apply to people who hate or are "offended" by homosexuals, and in so doing want to cause them harm in some way. On the other hand, simply being "repulsed" by the sight of two men kissing cannot be compared to the notion of having negative opinions toward homosexuals, or of wanting to persecute them. I believe that the homophobia is, in reality, mistaken for the much more common repulsion factor.

WAYNE ASHLEY
Winnipeg

I found the cover of the *Free Press* Sept. 19 to be out of this world. Two men kissing is not news. I have the paper for my customers to read and they found it offensive, too. More of this and I will cancel my subscription.

BEN REMPEL
Winkler

When my 10-year-old son saw the front page of today's paper (asking if a picture of two men kissing stressed you) he said to me, "Why would that stress anyone out? It's just two guys kissing." Homophobia isn't innate — it's taught.

CHRIS LOEWEN
East St. Paul

Incendiary bombast

Re: *Firefighters bash plan* (Sept. 18). Firefighters' union boss Alex Forrest foolishly thinks he knows more about saving lives than our acting fire chief. What he's really up to in his typical incendiary bombast is attempting to keep a stranglehold on city coffers, not, as he claims, foremost to save lives but to maintain the sometimes-coddled position of his members.

JOANNE CRAIG
Winnipeg

More nuance required

The University of Winnipeg's Eco-Kids program is an easy and visible target (*U of W resolution unanimous*, Letters, Sept. 16). But why stop here? A more nuanced intellectual position would have students reflect on the oil-driven products and conveyances they currently use, unless they are certain that these products do not emanate from the dirty oil.

The students, perhaps unwittingly themselves, have caused us all to pause and reflect on what meaningful sacrifices we all could and should make toward ensuring a healthy environment. In its absence, however, we are forced to accept a second-best option.

This is one that works to minimize the social

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LETTER OF THE DAY



The average consumer struggles with the high cost of living.

We have no choice but debt

Your Sept. 17 editorial *Household debt must slow down* exhorts Canadians to lower their debts and to save for retirement. Never do you mention the heavy tax burden imposed by the three levels of government. (Canadians must work for governments until June before they can access their own hard-earned money.) Never is mentioned the plethora of user fees, nor the rapidly rising costs of utilities, food, clothing, transportation, etc.

While bemoaning personal debt burdens,

elected representatives pay themselves handsomely as they wait to collect their undeservingly high pensions, senators enjoy compensation and perks the ordinary Canadian can only imagine, and banks collect their obscene profits.

And in the meantime, the average Canadian is squeezed like a lemon.

Lower debt? Save for retirement? How?

GLORIA JOHNSTON
Winnipeg

costs and fallouts. However, this position would force us to accept that companies such as Enbridge Pipelines do contribute to the community. In a less-than-perfect world, the Eco-Kids program was a fair effort towards this end.

The students with objections will likely continue on with their current practices. But their action has caused the closure of a program that was highly beneficial for inner-city youth.

ROBERT DANIELS
Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council
Portage la Prairie

U.S. attitudes confused

Re: *U.S., Russia square off over Syria* (Sept. 13). Perhaps one of the most disturbing events of the Syrian civil war is the confused attitude of the American government.

The CIA just admitted it has been supplying the Syrian rebels with arms "for several weeks" now. The rebels are al-Qaida backed and, yes, the same group responsible for attacking the Twin Towers in New York 12 years ago.

A group that murdered almost 3,000 Americans has suddenly become "friends" of the United States? Where is this going?

AL YAKIMCHUK
Winnipeg

The U.S. is grandstanding to the world over the apparent use of some chemicals in Syria. The nobility of it all.

Surely this cannot be the same country that squandered \$4.75 trillion killing up to a million people in two weak little countries who were no threat to anyone.

Surely this can't be the same country that, not content with slaughtering a million Vietnam-

ese with its trillion-dollar war machine, then proceeded to drown the countryside with 18 million gallons of Agent Orange and several other chemicals, causing an estimated 400,000 deaths, 500,000 birth defects, and countless cases of cancer.

Nor could it be the same country that supplied and supported its friend at the time Saddam Hussein in gassing thousands of Kurds, nor the one that left a devastated Iraq cooking in a cauldron of depleted uranium. Nor could it be the one that turned a blind eye to the use of white phosphorus in Iraq and Gaza.

Alas, it is.

FRANCIS TRUEMAN
Winnipeg

Alberta disadvantage

Re: *Alberta a throwback to Medicis' Florence* (Sept. 16). Sadly, Trevor Harrison's analogy holds much truth.

I lived with my young family in Edmonton in the early 1980s. The public school system was abominable then. We didn't stay.

Fast forward to 2013, and successive governments have perpetuated the "social landscape" he describes. Premier Redford seems to believe her mandate is to lobby in Washington for the powerful oil companies.

It is shocking to think they are running a deficit, while at the same time mailing out royalty cheques to residents.

I read recently that Alberta will continue to influence Canada for the next generation. What does that say about the rest of us?

"Poverty amongst plenty" is an understatement.

JANICE ISOPP
Selkirk