

TENNIS

Rallying point

Swiatek bounces back to earn spot in quarterfinals **DiManno SI**

INSIGHT

Power to spare

How renewables are providing free electricity in Australia, U.K. **INI**



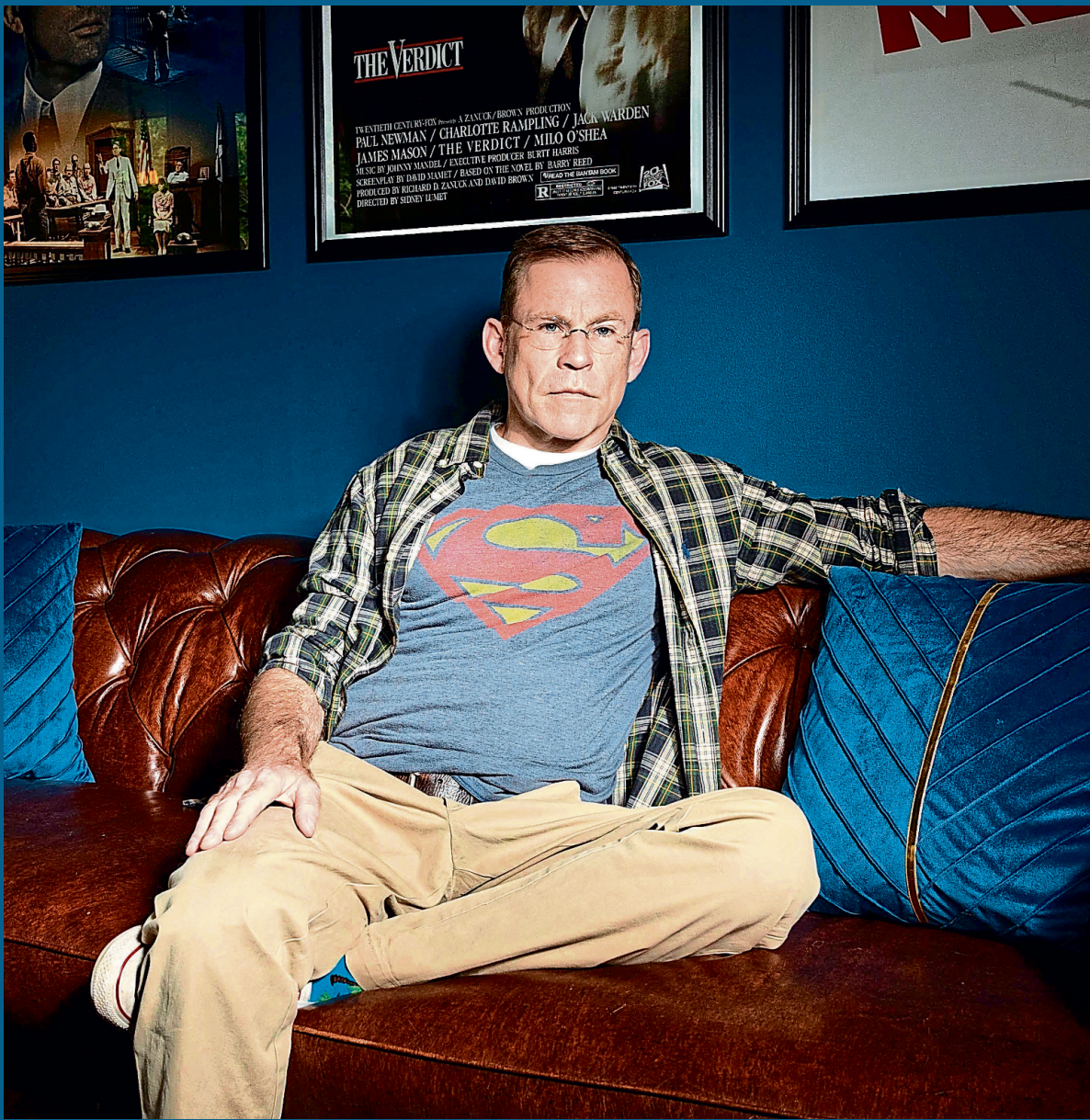
PROUDLY CANADIAN OWNED SINCE 1892

SUNDAY STAR

WEATHER HIGH 27 C | SUNNY | MAP A18 SUNDAY, AUGUST 9, 2026

THE murder lawyer

Monte MacGregor has built a career defending the most reviled accused. He's also the nicest person in the room



SOPHIE BOUQUILLON/TORONTO STAR

BETSY POWELL
COURTS REPORTER

The trial of Becky Hamber and Brandy Cooney was a place of unrelenting darkness. Week after week, a Milton courtroom heard how the Burlington couple starved and neglected a 12-year-old boy until he died in his basement room, hungry, cold and alone. First responders, teachers and even physicians shed tears while testifying. They were, as the judge later wrote, “scarred people.” Many murder trials are difficult to watch, but few are as horrifying. And, as the months wore on, it was impossible not to observe the

trial without wondering what kind of person could advocate for the women who withheld food as punishment, zip-tied the boy and his little brother into wetsuits and helmets and exchanged thousands of vile text messages. “Loser,” Hamber wrote in one, adding later, “hope he gets an infection.” At the defence table sat Monte MacGregor, known for taking on cases that seem unwinnable. The Toronto lawyer has done so many murder trials he’s lost count. In the past few years, there was a drug dealer who opened fire on a car of teenagers, killing a 12-year-old boy walking nearby with his mother. **SEE LAWYER, A6**

20,000 forced to flee wildfire in B.C.

One death reported as premier declares state of emergency

BRENNA OWEN

PENTICTON, B.C. RCMP in British Columbia say they are investigating a possible fatality in the explosive wildfire in the Okanagan that has triggered a provincial state of emergency and forced thousands of people to evacuate. Helicopters were diverted from the fire fight to pluck dozens to safety from the blaze that Premier David Eby said on Saturday was “like a bomb” going off as it roared toward Summerland and Peachland on the shores of Okanagan Lake. More than 20,000 people were ordered to flee and evacuation alerts extended to the northern edge of Penticton, where many evacuees have been sent. RCMP said in a statement that the evacuations were challenging in areas cut off by the flames, and a resident of Meadow Valley, west of Summerland, reported the possible death. “Hazardous conditions are present in the region and police along with the BC Coroners Service are investigating to confirm,” the statement said. “Officers are working closely with the impacted family.” Eby said that the Bald Range fire destroyed homes, and although officials have not tallied the destruction, the flame front overwhelmed the community of Faulder, consisting of several dozen houses and rural properties. A perimeter map put out by the BC Wildfire Service on Saturday suggested the fire rolled over numerous homes right to the waterline north of Summerland, and social media videos showed multiple homes ablaze as residents fled, with fire on both sides of the road. The fire that erupted at 5:30 p.m. Friday grew to more than 100 square kilometres as it sped 15 kilometres east toward Okanagan Lake in a matter of hours. **SEE WILDFIRE, A8**

Can our summer festivals be saved?

Planners, business groups propose ways to make large events sustainable amid rising security concerns and overcrowding

BEN COHEN
CITY HALL BUREAU

It has been a summer of thwarted celebrations. Marquee street festivals in Toronto were cut short, moved out of the city or cancelled outright over issues with financing, space, violence and thefts. Some organizers say growing security costs and concerns since the deadly vehicle attack in Vancouver last year and shootings at Salsa on

St. Clair last month made their events too expensive to host. This was worsened, they say, by the World Cup siphoning away corporate sponsorship money this year, forcing local events to make do with less. Even Taste of the Danforth, one of the city’s most storied, well-funded festivals, had supporters petition the federal government this week for more help with payments. But the most trying issues can’t be abated by subsidies, planners say. These are problems posed by the

geography of Toronto. When a festival reaches a certain level of popularity, police and civil servants start to question whether it can be safely contained. Do West Fest, which organizers estimated would bring more than a million people to Dundas Street West between Ossington and Lansdowne avenues over a weekend in June, was shut down early by police after dozens of reported thefts and assaults. **SEE FESTIVALS, A4**

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MIDEAST WAR

New demands complicate talks



Iranians say strait won’t reopen until U.S. meets long list of conditions **A2**