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# An open letter to Elon Musk



you highlighted some statistics from the newly minted Department of Government Efficiency account and added this comment: "America is currently headed for bankruptcy super-fast."

I responded on X, offering to take the other side of this bet (as long as we kept it under a billion dollars). I'm still waiting to hear back.

I know that the president-elect has asked you to help save some government money, but I'm really not sure that this makes you an expert in monetary policy.

It reminds me of an interaction I had with Chris Stals around the

turn of the century, not long after he had stepped down as governor of the Reserve Bank. Someone asked him about government spending, and he responded by telling the audience that he loved a seaside holiday, even though he was terrified of sharks. He had worked out how to cope with this conundrum, however, by doing a deal with the sharks: they undertook never to go into the bar again, and he promised not to put another foot into the ocean.

Accordingly, Stals told us that he and former finance minister Trevor Manuel had a long-standing agreement: Stals never commented on fiscal policy, and Manuel did not get involved in monetary policy.

You will always be one of Pretoria's finest, Elon; you are right up there with Naas Botha and Steve Hofmeyr. But there's a message in the former South African central banker's shark story, and it is that one should stay in one's lane (or in your particular case, any one of the six lanes where you've proved to be such an expert).

Please keep focusing on what you do best. Forget about monetary policy and just get us to Mars. ✘

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**D**ear Elon  
You and I grew up only 30 miles from each other in the old Transvaal, back in the 1970s. But we are not the same.

You own and manage six companies, all in different industries. I'm desperately trying to hold on to one job.

You are the richest person in the world. My family, friends and I barely get by in comparison.

You have at least 11 children with three women. I'm just doing my best to keep my one wife and my single teenage daughter happy.

Your Wikipedia entry runs to 87 pages of A4 paper when printed in a normal 12-point font size. Yes, I wanted a hard copy to scan through before writing this piece – I'm a bit old-fashioned like that. Just the footnotes run to a total of 668 references. I don't have a Wikipedia page.

You have more than 200-million followers on X (or Twitter, as we used to call it before you bought the thing). I have a grand total of 4,000.

You're also a lot more active on this social media platform than I am. The Economist recently ran a piece analysing your messages on X over the past decade – all 38,000 of them. Since you took over the

company a couple of years ago, you've been posting more than 30 times per day. You also do so consistently throughout the day and night ... imagine how much more productive you could be if you just made time to get a bit of sleep now and then?

In one of those posts on X, you recently confirmed that you are trying to "make life multiplanetary to maximise the probable lifespan of consciousness". Put differently, you are determined to get us to Mars some time soon. I'm very inspired by that, Elon. Personally, I'm just hoping to get my family to Mauritius in the next few years.

And then of course, there's your political involvement – not only on X, where I can no longer log on without seeing the latest conspiracy theory that you may find interesting, but also in real life, as you traipse around the US as Donald Trump's wingman. Congratulations on the elevated status, by the way; it's a very long way from Danville to DC, but you've managed to do it in one lifetime. An intergalactic transfer must look like a hop, skip and jump from there.

And finally, your newfound interest in the Federal Reserve and US national debt. You've been posting about this broad topic for a while. A few weeks ago,