

GOVERNMENTS MUST STAND UP TO BIG TECH

Buy a car, or a toy car for that matter, and pay taxes. We live in an economy and society built on the transactions of goods and services. Generally, we know any transaction will include a share toward our public costs. That's how it works.

For most of us.

But the world's largest corporations – all Big Tech – are taking money from us, our towns, villages and cities, without paying their fair share to contribute to those public costs.

While they are extracting dollars, billions of dollars, they are also extracting information, unimaginable amounts of information, about virtually every single Canadian.

With mind-boggling algorithms, they use that data to control commerce, marketing, and even information and news distribution – further increasing their reach and profits. Think Amazon's dominance of online shopping, Apple's control over the App Store and how Google now answers your questions on its home page rather than directing you to another source.

Our governments, with weak regulatory standards, are allowing them to do this.

Only our governments can insist these behemoths contribute relative to their revenue when it comes to our health, security, education and infrastructure. Only our governments can regulate what they do with your data to control the marketplace. And what are our legislators doing? Dragging their feet on regulation. Even spending our taxpayer money on advertising with social media giants like Facebook.

Read that again: spending taxpayer money on Facebook, which pays virtually no taxes, to reach voters because Facebook can collect voter information, unfettered, to parse and parcel for advertisers.

In 2018, the federal government spent \$39.2 million on digital advertising, and \$7.8 million of that on social media – close to \$6 million of that on Facebook.

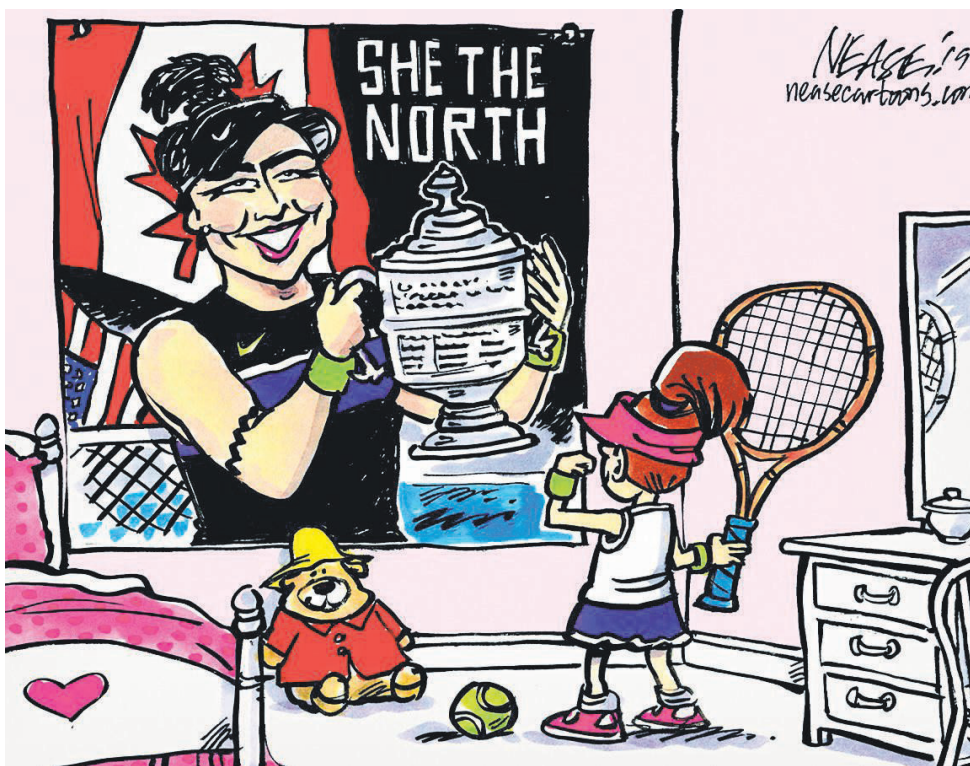
These digital giants are milking us of our information and taking revenue out of our economic cycle. Not only are legislators allowing it to happen, they're giving them more of our money along the way.

This newspaper has traditionally relied on advertising dollars to fund local journalism and bring you news and information about your community.

Those dollars are dwindling. Google and Facebook share 74 per cent of the \$6.8 billion spent on internet advertising in Canada, according to the Canadian Media Concentration Research Project – leaving local media struggling to survive.

We suspect this story's ending doesn't include greater privacy, strong local media or the ability of startups to get a foothold in the digital economy. Unless, that is, our provincial and federal governments find the courage to regulate them so they pay their fair share, and have limitations on how they use our information.

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EXERCISE CONTRIBUTES TO MENTAL HEALTH

IT'S FREE AND FUN,
WRITES MELANIE
MCGREGOR



MELANIE
MCGREGOR
Column

If something that could improve your mental health were free, offered tons of choices, and didn't require anything but your own energy and motivation, would you go for it? We probably all would, and it's right there waiting for us: exercise.

Canada's Physical Activity Guidelines recommend at least 150 minutes of at least moderate activity per week for adults, citing physical benefits that include reducing the risk of heart disease, stroke and high blood pressure.

We may not give much thought to mental health

benefits while doing it, but following are just some of the ways in which exercise can benefit our mental health and wellness:

- Improving our self-esteem.

When we take action to care for our overall health, we can feel pretty good about ourselves. Beats sitting at home criticizing ourselves for not taking such a positive step.

- Getting feel-good chemicals flowing.

Endorphins and serotonin pump through our bodies and brains when we're active and can improve our energy and mood.

- Taking a mental break. Physical activity can get our thoughts at least temporarily away from stressors and worries and give us something else to think about.

- Being mindful.

Turn up your music and really listen, focus on your steps, feel your breaths, take in all of your sur-

roundings - fully immerse yourself in the experience. Choose a type of activity you enjoy, not what others are doing or think you should do.

- Socializing.

Walk with a friend or set up a workout buddy to build connection into your plan.

On Sunday, Sept. 22, an amazing group called Noise is hosting a "Make it Loud" walk for mental health in Milton with all the proceeds helping to keep free walk-in counselling available in Halton. Walk 1 km or 5 km, enjoy great conversation, and MAKE IT LOUD!

Visit www.halton.cmha.ca to get more details, register, or donate and take steps for mental health and wellness.

Melanie McGregor is the communications and advancement specialist at the Canadian Mental Health Association Halton Region Branch, which provides mental health/addiction community support and education. Visit www.halton.cmha.ca for more information and follow @cmhahalton on Twitter.

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