

Opinion

I don't want to complain, but . . .

Slap.
"You wouldn't believe this place. I mean, it was really horrible. Not your garden variety horrible, no it was smelly, hot, dirty and not much fun. Like, I'm supposed to entertain myself, then what am I dishin' out the dough for?" Slap.

"Sounds like fun compared to my weekend. I cleaned out the septic tank, then ate a meal of fresh gruel at a fancy restaurant before coming home to face burst pipes. There was water everywhere. Like I hadn't already done enough work or had enough unpleasantness in my miserable existence." Slap.

"Yeah? Well let me tell you what miserable is all about. I cough up thousands of dollars for a vacation, and the food is terrible. 'We'll take care of everything' they say; yeah, take care of it poorly. The waiters were slow, the drinks were weak, and the chairs were uncomfortable. On top of that the water in the ocean is too warm to swim in." Slap.

How many times have you been faced with this ancient scourge of man? Yes, it's Tag Team Complaining. The concept allows everyone, no matter what socio-economic group they belong to, to enter the wonderful world of complaining. Not only do complainers get a breather between bouts of anger and whining, but they can adjust their complaints up to their neighbours' level. Or down to the merely incredible.

Anything can trigger Tag Team Complaining, but it flourishes in a group of people with similar backgrounds thrust into similar, uncomfortable circumstances. The place of business is a hotbed of tag team complainers.

The concept embraces a wide variety of group discussions. Imagine a number of mothers in a room who might engage in a specialized form of Tag Team Complaining. Overhearing a Tag Team Nagging session will drive males between the ages of conception and



**Reaume
With a View**
with BRAD REAUME

death to the brittle brink of insanity.

Listen to a group of men, freshly off the golf course, and see what Tag Team Sports Complaints are all about. In many cases the guys have the added advantage of already being formed into teams. Baseball, football, hockey, you name it and there's a lineup for tag team complaining both for sporting participants and for fans of televised sports. These guys will even complain about the announcers, the camera work and the audio quality.

It won't be long until some smart lawyer tries to organize these hordes into professional leagues. Hey, we all know someone we would nominate to the World Cup of Tag Team Complaining.

You need someone with that professional veneer of smoothness in whining. Someone who can look threatening and imploringly resigned at the same time. Someone who can sound wronged, terribly and irreparably cheated regardless of circumstance and outcome.

That's your professional Tag Team Complainer. It also happens to be a fair description of my neighbor, and my co-workers, and the government which seeks to rob me of the fruits of my labours.

The other day, I went into a gas station in the States and I paid \$15 for a full tank of gas. In Canada that costs me about \$35. Food is cheaper too, and beer, and the standard of living is higher, and . . . Slap.



I'll get to it, I promise I'll get to it

The day began with an 8 a.m. phone call. I rolled over on the bed and reached for the receiver.

"Hello," I mumbled.

"Hello" came the unfamiliar voice. "Do you still have the baby swing for sale? What kind is it?"

"Yellow and plastic," I replied. End of conversation. All week long people had been calling about baby items I had advertised for sale. They were obsessed with brand names. My stuff was either no-name or unknown-name.

I stretched, looking at the light filtering through the closed drapes. An overcast day, I guessed. Time to get up.

The night before I had drawn up a list of things to do. Writing them down, of course, did not guarantee completion. The day brought its own hidden agenda.

Chewing on a piece of cold toast with peanut butter and banana, I ran up and down the stairs gathering the dirty clothes. I threw a load of whites into the machine. Ooops, the water was boiling hot. No cold water. I checked the obvious reasons for the malfunction, but the old machine was broken again.

The four year old and I left the older two to wash strawberries while we drove to the laundromat. He and I stuffed five machines. Not wanting to miss a learning opportunity, I showed my youngest how to insert the quarters into the slots. Together we pushed in the coins then stood back to watch the action. Ooops, we had put the money into an empty machine.

Back home again, the four year old grabbed a mittful of berries. Ooops, a huge berry stain on his new T-shirt. I overreacted. I peeled off the shirt and attacked the stain, grumbling about how this happened every time the kids wore something new.

A few weeks ago, my husband had patched up some bald spots on our lawn, but the sod was brown. Not a pretty sight. I dug into a bag of grass seed and scattered the seeds, feeling like a sower of ancient times.

Next came the watering. The tap was located on one side of the house while the area I



**On the
Home Front**
with ESTHER CALDWELL

wanted to sprinkle was on the opposite side. I positioned the sprinkler, then walked back to the tap to turn it on. I returned to the sprinkler to check it. Too much water. Five back and forths later, I finally got it right.

Shrieks from inside the house alerted me to some unspeakable calamity. I ran into the living room. Ooops, I had forgotten to close the living room window. The sprinkler had showered my poor old upright piano. We grabbed towels and hastily dried off the tops of the keys, unable to catch the drips that slithered down between the ivories.

During the watering episode, an unexpected visitor arrived. Our backyard neighbour's dog had escaped from her yard. We lured her into ours for safekeeping until her owners returned. She raced around like a frisky puppy. Our three black cats came to investigate, meeting nose-to-nose with the canine intruder. Fortunately, fur and skin remained intact.

What better time for a spring cleaning than on the first day of summer? It was the car's turn. My eldest and I flipped for it. I vacuumed the inside, he washed the outside. There is no greater weapon in the hands of a child than a garden hose. My son threw caution and common sense to the wind and sprayed anything that moved, more specifically, the cats and his siblings.

My husband complains about interruptions at work — phone calls, meetings, frantic calls from his wife. At least he can leave them behind at the end of the day. Mine just keep coming — scratched knees to bandage, meals to prepare (my biggest interruption), fights to referee, bicycle tires to pump up, runaway cats to catch, spills to mop up . . .

Canadians don't want GST — poll

Perhaps the best gauge of how opposed the Canadian public is to the widely condemned Goods and Services Tax is that they believe the heavily criticized Senate has the right to reject the GST legislation.

The existence of the senate has been a sore point for Canadians for many years. Unelected senators, in their various poses of patronage appointees and party faithful, have often been vilified by a public disgusted with supporting the expensive but essentially decorative Upper House.

But recent poll results, conducted nationally by the Angus Reid Group on behalf of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, showed 62 per cent of respondents feel the Senate has a legitimate role to reject the GST legislation. (Only 29 per cent of the general public state they do not believe the Senate has the right while 9 per cent state no opinion on the matter).

Provincially, respondents in Manitoba and Saskatchewan gave the strongest boost to the Senate, with 79 per cent supporting the right to reject the GST. The Atlantic provinces checked in at 64 per cent support, British Columbia at 61 per cent, and Quebec at 52 per cent.

Even Albertans, who have expressed great dissatisfaction with the current structure of the Senate and whose provincial government wants the system changed in order to have stronger representation for their own province, supported to the tune of 65 per cent the Senate's right to kill the GST (results which matched those in Ontario).

On a national basis, Canadians also believe by 64 per cent to 26 per cent (10 per cent stated no opinion) that the Senate has the right to change the GST legislation.

Canadians must be very bitter indeed to be

Mainstream Canada

with TERRY O'SHAUGHNESSY

invoking the Senate's help. But the fact is, the public obviously feels the federal government rammed the GST legislation through the House of Commons before adequate discussion had been held on the many questionable aspects of the complex legislation.

The poll results back this up showing a strong national majority of 76 per cent of respondents expressing the view that the Senate should hold public hearings on the contentious tax. According to Catherine Swift, vice-president of research and chief economist for the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, these findings are very significant.

"There is a strong message here," says Ms Swift, "not only for the Senate but for the federal government. Canadians are not only displeased with the GST, they obviously feel that cross-country hearings are necessary in order to give the public a chance to be heard on this issue."

The bottom line is, regardless of how Canadians view the Senate in general terms, they fully endorse not only the Senate's right to change and reject the GST legislation, they also overwhelmingly support cross-country hearings.

But there's no doubt the fact that, by siding with the Senate against the GST, Canadians find themselves between a rock and a hard tax.



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