

# OPINION

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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## The real costs of government increases are not apparent

As the cost of government increases, other sources of funding, such as user fees, are being considered.

I'm in favour of user fees, because their implementation gives me the opportunity to demand accountability in justifying the fees levied by government.

Many of us are under the mistaken impression that we pay for these services through our home property taxes. It just isn't so. We don't pay enough.

If we look at minor sports, such as soccer, hockey and baseball, it's clear every player is subsidized by business and commercial property taxes, families without children and the elderly.

Like Dr. Angelika Koeth, whose letter on this subject appeared in Wednesday's *Champion*, I have two children playing in sports and I sponsor a team. Both my children are in elementary school.

According to the Halton Board of Education's figures, it costs taxpayers almost \$9,000 per year to pay for my children's education. Yet I only pay \$3,000 a year in property taxes.

Since I'm under-contributing \$6,000 on education alone, I certainly am not subsidizing any other services. Anyone with children is likely in the same situation.

I spoke to a local business person about this. Gary Thomas owns the Re/max Realty franchise in town.

He told me he pays roughly \$20,000 a year in business and property taxes.

That and similar contributions are what subsidize your children's recreational activities.

### VIEW POINT

with PATRICK KELLY



On top of that, many of these business owners sponsor teams.

Businesses can afford it, people say. Some can. But a quick check on the number of empty industrial condos and storefronts indicates how many couldn't.

It's worth pointing out that some people are paying the full freight in recreation. Those who joined the fitness facility at the Leisure Centre, known as the dry side, at least cover operating costs through their membership fees.

Those using the pool, or wet side, do not do so. It loses money.

For a family of four it costs \$6 to swim. A child alone may swim for \$1.85. That's a real bargain, as well as a healthier choice, compared to attending a movie. You can easily drop \$7 to \$10 per kid at the show, depending on the volume of junk food ingested.

Maybe tax dollars should subsidize movies?

We complain a great deal about government accountability, and rightly so, but we should really start questioning our own perceptions of what we truly support through our taxes. Only then can we evaluate what level of financial responsibility we should accept for services rendered.

## It can lead to psychiatric disorders

### Deal with teenage insomnia in early stages

At one time or another, most children have trouble going to sleep. Most of the time, it's nothing to worry about. Sometimes, however, the sleeping problem doesn't just go away by itself and the child will need help.

It's important to know when it will pass and when to get help, because new research suggests that sleeping disturbances can lead to more serious psychiatric disorders.

Insomnia means a person is consistently having trouble getting enough sleep, for at least two weeks straight, and the lack of sleep interferes with normal daily functioning.

Children will have trouble sleeping at times, especially during the teenage years. They're going through puberty, forming new intimate but fragile relationships.

They're going through a uniquely moody, sensitive, rebellious time, wanting more and more independence from their parents, who are resisting it and afraid to loosen the reins.

If your child goes to a dance and falls in love, insomnia is not the problem. If she was up late upset because she wasn't invited to a birthday party, insomnia isn't the problem.

If, however, your child can't go to sleep at his usual time, nothing happened during the day to cause any upset, and this continues for an extended period, then it is important to monitor whether it's affecting the child during



### PSYCHOLOGY IN THE '90s

with DR. ARNOLD RINCOVER

the day. Does the child appear more lethargic or irritable, is school work suffering? Is she not participating in extracurricular activities any more? Is so, it's time to get help.

It is very important to treat insomnia, and the earlier the better. Not only does insomnia interfere with normal daily functioning, but it may be an early sign, or even a cause, of psychiatric disorders. Treating the insomnia may in turn halt the progression of the psychiatric disorder.

In a well known study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (Sept. 15, 1989), conducted with over 800 insomniacs at Johns Hopkins Medical Center, the authors found that about two of three people who reported insomnia did not have it one year later.

So, the prognosis for improvement is very good even without treatment. On the other hand, however, an incredible 46.5 percent of



## Brrrrr - New Zealand looks good to us about now

"She's slower than molasses in January," I complained to a friend about a mutual acquaintance. He looked at me quizzically for a second, then said, "Oh, I get it."

"Get what?" I asked, then reminded myself that I was in New Zealand at the time (way back in the 1970s) and that my friend experienced January as the hottest month of the year, so our North American expression had no meaning down under.

When my husband and I first arrived in New Zealand, we were amazed at the steepness of many driveways, commenting almost simultaneously that they would be treacherous under winter ice and snow, at which point we realized the locals had never contended with such an unfriendly environment.

Many people we met when we lived in New Zealand and Australia could not understand why anyone would choose to live in a cold climate.



### ON THE HOMEFRONT

with ESTHER CALDWELL

In the middle of every Canadian winter, I wonder too as yet another frigid day assaults me when I walk outdoors.

These southerners imagined freezing in their homes and freezing outdoors, bereft of real protection against the elements.

Their homes featured perhaps one or two small electric heaters. They didn't own winter jackets, mitts, scarves and boots. The thought of living in a Canadian type climate frightened them.

Most of them believed we were pulling their legs when we said we plugged in our cars at night.

They also didn't appreciate that most cars are designed with their climate, not ours, in mind.

If designers had given us northerners a thought, surely they would have come up with heaters for those poor passengers relegated to the rear seats.

One Australian family who recently spent a winter in Canada had no idea what we did with the fallen snow. They imagined it just sitting on the roads and eventually disappearing on its own. That we actually got outside and shifted the white burden around to accommodate vehicles and pedestrians was a surprise to them.

Of course, the winter wonderlands displayed on postcards are misleading to those who have never visited snowy countries. The pictures don't show the streets laden in slush, dirt, brown-grey mounds of snow and replete with patches of hazardous ice.

And those southerners have no conception of the number of hours we invest in shovelling, or even in dressing and undressing to go to and fro by braving the elements.

Once in a while I fantasize about spending a rugged winter in the Yukon, the real north. How exciting and romantic.

But after this cold winter, my polar dream seems less appealing.

Instead, I am looking forward to shedding a few pounds of clothing and no longer seeing my breath every time I step out the door.