



OPINION

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

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Life is not a beach

Water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink. Unless of course it's chlorinated, fluoridated, filtered or boiled. That's been pretty much the case for most of my life in southern Ontario, with regard to Lake Ontario, anyway.

I can recall only a few summers as a teenager when you could safely swim at Toronto beaches, but my 11 and 13-year-old children have never been able to do so, and probably never will.

Since my last pleasure swim in Lake Ontario about 35 years and billions of government dollars ago, the situation has only worsened.

I worked as a volunteer on a number of occasions, doing both summer and winter scuba diving in Lakes Ontario and Erie, collecting water and sediment samples, which we took back to our chemistry and physics labs for identification. Thousands of miles away, off the coast of Trinidad and Tobago, I did the same thing on a coral reef ecology course.

There, far away from Ontario's industrial pollutants, we found the same problem which most often prevents us from swimming in our own lakes. It's called *escherchia coli* bacterium. It is 1/10,000 of an inch long and found in the human intestine.

We may think Canada has thousands of square miles of vacant land, upon which we could absorb millions more people, but with the inadequate treatment plants and poor land use we currently employ, our lakes long ago reached the saturation point for absorption of human and animal waste, at least for untreated drinking and swimming purposes.

In our community we plan to hook up to an Oakville plant for sewage treatment. That plant is unable to handle current *escherchia coli* levels. Any time we have a major rainstorm, the

View Point

with PATRICK KELLY



resultant runoff brings with it the detritus of septic tanks and the washings of thousands of cow pies and other animal droppings, which not only close Lake Ontario beaches but have closed nearby Kelso Conservation Area on occasion.

To compensate, we build community chlorinated pools while continuing to overpopulate our land, resulting in more garbage dumps, more human waste, more cows to feed us and more pollution.

Somewhere there is a message that this overgrowth is poisoning us, but it falls on deaf ears.

Our government's answer is concrete, asphalt and chain link fences in place of nature's grass, trees and open spaces. Try as they might, they can't improve on Mother Nature, and they certainly can't replace her.

More and more people, including my children, have never experienced a day swimming at a clean local beach. Ask them about beaches and they'll tell you about Florida, and swimming is done in a backyard pool or at a community centre.

Bigger is better we're told. We must grow to compete.

It's past time we gave these proponents the big flush they deserve. But not into Lake Ontario.

Preventing children from becoming hypochondriacs

Melanie woke up with a headache. She told her mom she couldn't get out of bed, her head was ready to explode. Mom kept Melanie home from school, gave her some aspirin, and everyone was happy to see that Melanie was well enough to have friends over in the afternoon and go outside to play.

Mom was always overprotective of her two children, and their health had always been her domain, one she protected tooth and nail. It was her way of binding the children to her, of feeling important, of making them love her and need her. She didn't realize that she was fostering hypochondriasis by over-reacting to every minor complaint.

Three months later, Melanie and her brother were complaining almost daily of one ailment or another — especially when it was time to do homework, do chores or go to soccer practice (they were fine for games). These ailments were usually forgotten when a friend came over.

After six months, both children were regularly complaining of ailments everywhere and to everyone — at school, at their piano lessons, at friends' houses. They were accustomed to getting so much attention and comfort, as well as getting out of doing anything they didn't want to do, that their perceived ailments took on a life of their own. If you didn't react (or didn't react fast enough), the "symptoms" got worse.

If a school nurse checked Melanie and simply sent her back to class, the complaining escalated into a tantrum that disrupted the whole class and mom would have to be called (and Melanie



Psychology in the '90s

with DR. ARNOLD RINCOVER

taken home). Melanie and her brother had 25 to 30 absences and the same number of late reports at school last year.

Melanie and her brother were well on their way to becoming hypochondriacs.

The hypochondriac is constantly preoccupied with the feeling that there is something wrong with their body, even though no real problem exists. Some people are overly sensitive to their bodies, some have bodies that are overly reactive, but others are simply trained as children to attend to, worry about and complain over virtually any sensation.

Any real minor insult to the body, like falling down or scraping a knee, becomes a major trauma requiring hours (or days) of tender loving care, as well as a hefty amount of attention from friends, teachers and family.

At first, Melanie only used these complaints to manipulate others. It wasn't long until she started to really worry about every physical sensation, thinking there was really something wrong.



MICHAEL & LISA MARIE AT HOME

We collect other people's clothes

Not to be outshone by handy hubby, who is happily hammering away on the cottage expansion, I am assuming the important position of overseer of the growing pile of personal belongings that is accumulating as each new guest departs.

Hubby's wandering aunts got the ball rolling the day after we arrived at the cottage for the summer. Their unexpected visit sent us into a tailspin as we hurried to unpack our carloads of gear. Fortunately, they did not expect to be served dinner (they know me well) and we spent a pleasant evening catching up on the goings-on of distant cousins.

Early the following morning, long before we even stirred, probably around six, the aunts quietly took off again, heading towards the Gaspé. Sitting neatly on the dresser was the North Carolina aunt's cardigan. They are on the go for



On the Homefront

with ESTHER CALDWELL

the summer, so it will be some time before owner and sweater meet up again. Having no way to contact them, I have no idea whether the aunt knows the whereabouts of her sweater. Will her garment remain pristine while under our care?

The weekend after the aunts' stay, hubby brought up a 10-year-old friend of our youngest. The quiet, serious youth I had remembered from our neighbourhood turned out to be a loud, unpredictable hellion who casted his fishing rod on the front lawn, snagging a lure high in a tree, where it still remains. He returned to town first thing Monday morning — without his Blue Jays cap.

On that same weekend, a child's dinghy floated into our beach. Everything floats our way — weeds, dead fish — but this was one of our better catches. Although we have made no effort to conceal it, no one has claimed ownership.

The next weekend, hubby the taxi driver transported a friend of our 11-year-old. The girls camped out in the tent, where the child ended up leaving behind her broad, black belt.

Our latest departees forgot their daughter's reading glasses in a dresser drawer and two bathing suits on hooks behind the master bedroom door.

Let's not forget the endless stream of relatives, mostly young cousins, who converge on us, leaving in their wake towels, bathing suits, flannel shirts, socks, sunglasses, watches, and even life jackets. Hair paraphernalia always abound with scrunchies, coloured elastic bands, and a collection of hairbrushes.

The most recent loss has been a \$5 bill that propelled itself out of a young guest's shorts pocket when, in her enthusiasm to check out the lake, she didn't take the time to change into her bathing suit. We aren't sure how long a paper bill will float, but we are on the lookout for it. Perhaps the mythical muskie that lurks in the nether regions of our small, shallow lake has already consumed it.

I can't wait for our next visitors to arrive, or rather, for them to depart.