

Opinion/Letters

Listen to the other side of the story



**NORTHERN
INSIGHTS**

by **Larry Sanders**



In January of this year, the Ontario government started garnisheeing pay cheques of divorced spouses not making support payments. The *theory* behind the legislation is sound: instead of forcing mothers on to welfare to support their children, the law allows the government to seize payments from ex-husbands. With up to 75 per cent of divorced fathers delinquent, the legislation makes sense to cash-starved politicians.

Keith Scott is one of those "delinquent fathers." In January, the government started taking 50 per cent of his net pay—more than \$1,200 a month—because he was two years behind in support payments to his ex-wife Lisa in Michigan. All Lisa had to do was phone a toll-free number and complain, and the garnishee kicked in.

But there is another side to this story—Keith's. In February, Keith invited my wife and I to visit him in Red Rock to hear that story.

I have not made it public until now at his request, as he waited for machinations of the legal system to deliver what turned out to be unsuccessful attempts to regain custody of his two children, Heather and Ben. Now that those efforts have failed, Keith has given me the green light to tell his story—hoping that the province might reconsider the fairness of legislation that forces fathers to "pay up", without any re-course or appeal mechanism when the father's rights are not being respected.

Keith Scott is the recreation director in Red Rock. He's known as a skilled professional who organizes winter carnivals or learn-to-swim programs. But Keith's personal life is a living hell. His willingness to make this story public takes plenty of courage—something he's needed in abundance to survive the last decade or so of his life.

Keith met the woman who is now his ex-wife, Lisa Promo, while getting his Bachelor's degree at Lake Superior State University in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. They courted for a year, lived together another year, then got married in September of 1981, just as Keith was starting the last year of his Bachelor's program.

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Conserving water is easier than you think

When most of us think about cleaning up the environment, we think that there isn't much an individual can do, or we believe that anything we might do would be costly or time consuming. Here are a few tips that take little time and may actually save you money.

When you brush your teeth, run the water only when you are using it and shut it off while you brush.

If you have a leaky faucet, especially hot water, fixing it quickly will not only save on water and electricity, it will save the aggravation of listening to the drip.

Buy a water saving shower head. These can save up to 70 per cent in water use and give the same pressure as a regular shower.

Put a "dam" in your toilet so less water is needed to fill up the tank. You can use anything that takes up space—a rock, a brick, or a container filled with water at the bottom of the tank.

To rinse dishes, fill up the sink or basin rather than letting the tap run, and if you have a dishwasher, make sure you use it efficiently.

When washing clothes, avoid half loads. Use the lowest water level and temperature possible and always use a cold rinse.

Don't make your water hotter than necessary—120 deg. F (or 50 deg. C) is adequate. Setting your tank at a higher temperature only gives you water hotter than you need and can cause scalding. Put an insulating blanket around your hot water tank and the pipes leading to and away from it. If you go away for more than a few days, turn your water heater off.

Wash the car using a bucket and save the hose for only the final rinse.

Water your garden and lawn only in the morning or evening. Less water will evaporate than would in the heat of the afternoon, allowing your lawn to retain moisture better. And aim the sprinkler so only your lawn or garden gets water. The sidewalk and driveway can do without.

Since we are surrounded by lakes and rivers, you may not think that water conservation is important in northern Ontario. But by reducing water consumption, we reduce the demand on both our water and sewage treatment plants, which consume energy and our tax dollars. These suggestions provide an idea of how easy it is to help the environment by looking at just one of our habits—water use. Please take the time to think next time you turn on the tap.

Lola Este,
Schreiber EAGER



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