

# OPINION

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## Be a voter - not a venter on October 25

We've been taxed in yet a new way by government - this time mentally.

Canada's economy is still reeling from the recession and whichever party is to rule this time around, they'd better be ready to make critical decisions about our prospects for the future.

This time our vote is an awesome responsibility. Voting is going to require a considered opinion on a number of financial issues which we've been happy to leave to the likes of Mr Crowe in the past.

Take free trade as just one example - the PC party says the free trade agreement is working already for Canada and NAFTA is a welcome next step.



Viewpoint

Jo Ann Stevenson

The Liberals would make changes to that agreement and to NAFTA but they too favor expanding trade.

The NDP would abrogate free trade, end NAFTA talks as well, saying it threatens the Auto Pact.

All three mainstream parties support GATT.

Can we form our own opinion without reading a dozen trade agreement manuals?

This one issue alone is why many Canadians are going to have a tough time voting this Oct. 25.

Just not voting registers as apathy. Besides, that's undemocratic and unproductive. Appearing at the polls to officially register a vote as declined is only temporarily satisfying.

Voting for a fringe party out of frustration with the big three doesn't work either. Long after the public has forgotten its anger over the perceived arrogance of Peterson it lives with the consequences of the landslide victory for the NDP.

It is generally recognized that many mainstream voters chose NDP hoping to weaken

majority control and create a balance of power. There is a tendency for people this time around to consider voting fringe for the same reason. (Voting fringe for rational reasons is not in question.)

A vote is not a vent. Education solves the problem. Talk to people involved in export business, call the chamber of commerce, the board of trade, the Canadian Manufacturer's Association. And talk to your local candidates if the national leaders are too hard to read.

## Dual career couples need flexible hours

Aside from a handful of innovative companies, the majority of workplaces still harbor a 50s mentality toward working parents.

Both men and women continue to be penalized, in the minds of superiors, for having familial responsibilities. Employers still wash their hands of any reminders that most men and women must juggle a number of different roles with expectations to excel in each one.

For example, most companies offer rigid hours of employment, and remain close-minded to the option of flexible hours.

A choice of flex hours could be just the solution many parents need while trying to schedule a successful marriage of family and career.

Productivity between the hours of 8:30 and 4:30 is no different than productivity between the hours of 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. A valued employee will produce satisfactory results regardless of the sequence of hours he or she has chosen to work; the fact that their employer is supportive and flexible will only enhance productivity and loyalty.

On-site daycare is another important issue that remains virtually ignored by the corporate world.

Although most employees would gratefully pay for the convenience of such a benefit, leaving very little expense to the employer, most companies continue to waste money on re-hiring and re-training, losing many excellent employees, with great future potential, in the process. Statistics prove that companies with the insight to support on-site daycare have a minimal employee turn-over rate and, thus, enjoy long-term retention of valued employees.

Children get sick. Parents dread news of a sick child as much as the employer does. A good employee that is forced to stay home occasionally with his or her sick child, doesn't

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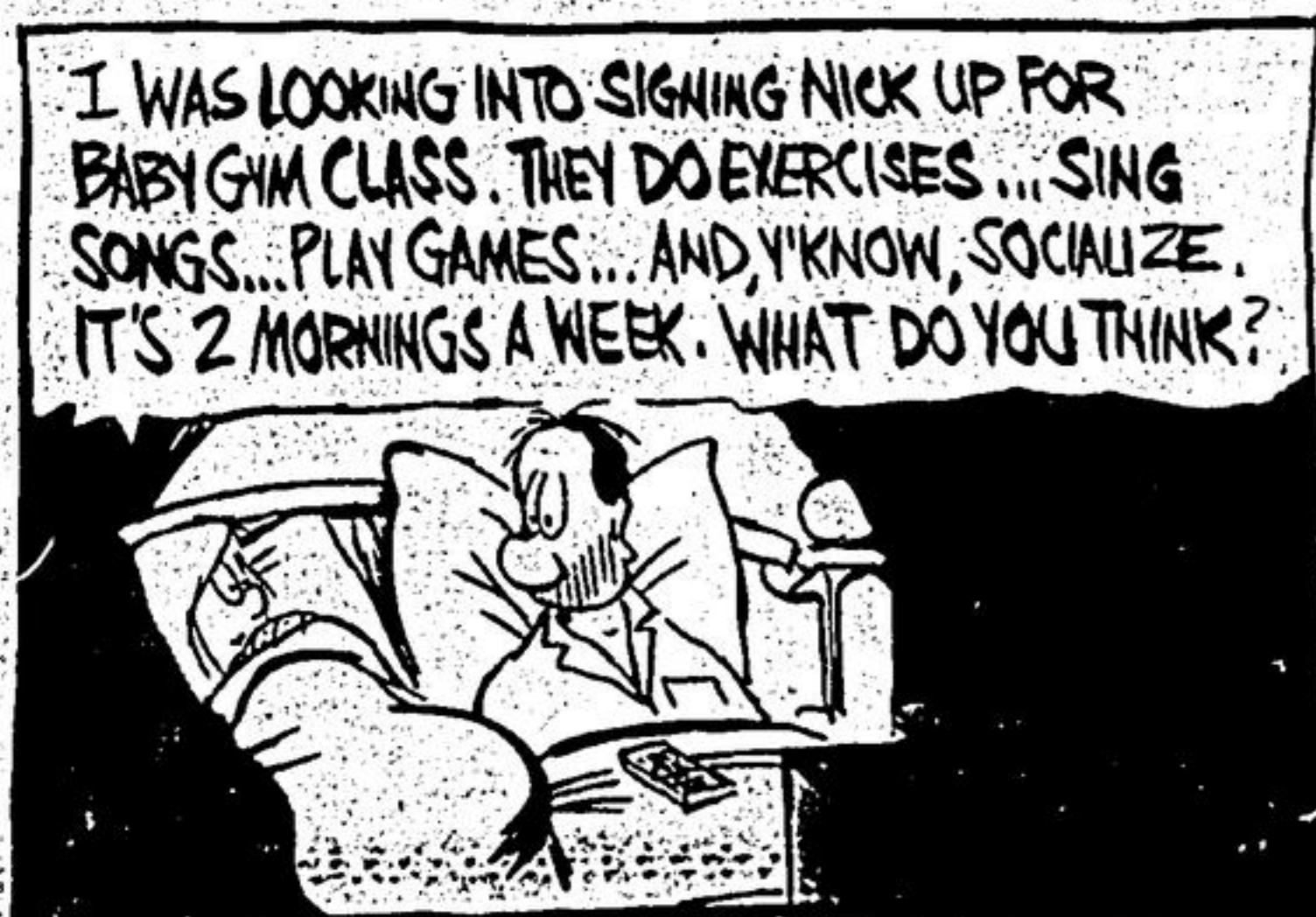
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Adam®

by Brian Basset



expect the company to pick up the tab.

A good employee does resent the added stress of guilt-trips and pressure from superiors. Compounded resentment is the key to failed productivity, not occasional absences from the workplace.

On the other hand, if an employer wants to enforce pay deduction for sick-time off with children, fair employees will agree.

Perhaps the absent employee could work at home or make up lost hours once the child is well, either after regular working hours or on a weekend.

There are so many options for companies to consider. Children and adults get sick. It's a fact of life. Nobody should be penalized because of this when there exists so many alternatives to ensure that productivity remains unaffected.

Short of demanding that people refrain from having offspring (which would eventually lead to zero prospective employees in the future to keep these businesses running), corporations, as well as small businesses, must restructure their views on family.

Brainstorming with employees, for instance, would be a start to discovering functional solutions that would lead to a fair, workable balance for both employer and employee.

It's time for employers to wake up and "get with the times" ... because the only threat to workplace productivity is a persistent 50s inflexibility toward the dual-career couple of the 90s!

Donna Marrin Markham