

Opinion

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Would you vote to become a global citizen?

Right now we are focused on the upcoming federal budget, wondering or worrying about the expected cuts in social programs and changes to tax laws.

Uptight as we may feel about our personal finances, we're still among the 20 per cent of people in the world using 80 per cent of the world's resources.

So the question being posed in a United Nations Summit for Social Development today is, "Is there the will to share?"

Sam Bowman, a local volunteer is attending the sessions in New York this week and says it's easy to become despondent when meeting eye to eye with some of the delegates from third world countries.

The statistics are daunting



Viewpoint

Jo Ann Stevenson

One in every five people worldwide live below the poverty level and if current economic and demographic trends continue, those suffering extreme poverty will quadruple within one lifetime.

But rather than feel despondent, our delegate cites an upbeat feeling - this conference is being attended by many people committed to finding a global strategy. There is some will to alter the mindset of the developed

nations. Their preliminary initiatives will progress to Copenhagen for the World Summit in March. The slogan on that road to Copenhagen is "successful societies are those which focus on people."

Let's suppose that at that conference the real issues of food distribution, health care provision and wide-scale education were taken as directives.

Proposals to make us world citizens and world taxpayers would begin to make their way to our governments. Before long, we'd be asked to choose between candidates holding fast to status quo or for those of the new world order.

But when we vote, we won't actually be staring eye-to-eye into the face of a third world

delegate as is Sam Bowman this week.

If this summit is anything like the UN Earth Summit, we'll become more aware of the solutions to deteriorating conditions around the world - poverty, unemployment and social disintegration. (The way we became aware of 'sustainable development'.)

These two summits are parallel and complimentary - the second building on the momentum of the first.

How will you vote?

The McIntyre's are going south - the pole

Well, here we are, ice-bound in the black hole of the annual Canadian weather experience which is to say, right smack in the frosted bulls-eye of yet another winter - and do you know what we'll both be thinking about today?

The only thing that really, really matters to any Canuck who finds him or herself up to the axles in white stuff - escape.

We will be thinking meteorotic thoughts of Acapulco, Vera Cruz and Tampico Bay. We will muse indecently of swaying palms, white beach sand hot enough to toast one's tootsies and tangy margaritas served with love in long-stemmed glasses as big as bird-baths.

We will entertain uncharitable thoughts about the bloated plutocrats among us, who are rich enough to turn the Canadian mid-winter fantasy into reality. The ones who can actually afford to hop aboard those southbound chartered 747s, leaving the rest of us stranded in the drifts, in our galoshes and earmuffs, growling muffled curses into our scarves and shaking our snowshovels skyward.

Canadians will generate a Great Lake's worth of envy today, but one southbound couple we will not be wishing to exchange places with is the McIntyres.

Don and Margie McIntyre - I mean they too are heading south and they're not doing it on the cheap.

They've got two count 'em two boats full of supplies - enough to keep them in grub and spare clothes for a couple of years.

By the time it's over, the McIntyres will spend almost half a million bucks on this little vacation, what with the satellite communication links, the solar and wind-turbine power generators and what not, but you have to spend money if you really want to get away from it all, right?

And the McIntyres figure they really will be getting away from it all. They don't expect to see another human for the next year.

That's because the southern resort spa they're heading for is on the shores of Commonwealth Bay, Antarctica. Population: nada.

They'll be living in a fibreglass hut especially reinforced to withstand winds of 20 miles an hour - which is what they can expect on the shores of Commonwealth Bay.



Basic Black

Arthur Black

a destination designated as "kingdom of blizzards" by those tourists luckless or witless enough to have stayed overnight before.

The most famous visitors would have to be the 18-man exploration team led by Australian geologist Douglas Mawson, back before the first World War. In the spring of 1912, starving members of the Mawson expedition were reduced to eating their own sled dogs. Two men perished, one went bonkers and Mawson himself staggered back to base camp just in time to see his rescue ship steaming out to sea.

None of which deters the McIntyres, who have cheerily dubbed their adventure "Together Alone: Expedition Ice-Bound". The prospect of sitting out a 365-day long winter storm doesn't phase them. In fact, they're toting an extra year's worth of vittles just in case the pack ice prevents their scheduled rendezvous with a supply ship next December.

Well, okay, but what do you - you know - do when you find yourself virtually snowed in for an entire calendar year? In Antarctica of all tropical vacation spots.

It's not like you can count on wandering Mariachi bands or occasional busloads of party hearty dentists from the Midwest. Hey, Antarctica's so remote it doesn't even have a team in the Canadian Football League.

Don and Margie figure they'll handle the solitude okay. He plans to work on a three-foot model of Captain Cook's famous ship Endeavor. As for Margie, she says she intends to stitch and stuff 50 teddy bears to sell at an Australian charity auction later.

And Don McIntyre's got experience - he's considered one of Australia's toughest sailors.

Margie? Well, she says she's never actually skied or snowshoed. As a matter of fact she's scarcely ever seen snow.

Do I think they'll make it? Why not? Hell, they sound almost wacky enough to be Canadians.



ADAM

by Brian Basset

