

# OPINION

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### You can blame yourself for economic troubles, shoppers

Those were the good old days, the 1950s and 1960s, when people were proud to be Canadian or American.

People could support themselves and their neighbours by buying products from themselves.

We didn't have stores that sold nothing but cheap junk imported from foreign countries using "predatory pricing".

Small business and local manufacturing were not all but annihilated and competition in business took place on a level playing field.

Government and corporate executives were responsible and accountable and not just overpaid fat cats.

And then came the politicians who "knew better" and trade with countries who pay their workers 80 or 90 cents a day was seen and sold to us as a good thing.

Cheap products flooded our shores and our own manufacturing was forced to relocate or close taking the jobs with them. Now we reap what we have sown.

I believe Canada and America can still be saved but we all have to think and act a little differently.

I hear criticism of the government's plan to bail out GM, Ford and Chrysler.

Although there have been quality issues,

I would still like to personally thank all three of them for what they have given us.

Without them, their supporting industries and the unselfish resolve of our soldiers, we would all be speaking a different language today and who knows what life for us would have been like. From 1942-1945 it took all of the manufacturing power of the automakers to help win the war.

Right now, our automotive products are second to none and yet we continue to support every country but ourselves. People will say, "...but those companies are building their cars in North America now!" No, they're not!! All the parts are still manufactured in Japan and shipped here for assembly.

We run to stores to buy cheap imported products and send those profits to China, again ignoring the laws of cause and effect. Some of us might be better off in the very short term but when the dust settles and there are no jobs for our kids, what will happen?

If we do not think of where our money is going and do not immediately change our own buying habits to rebuild and support our own manufacturing, then there is not a thing that any government can do.

If you love your kids and your country, you have the power to change course and give them all that you were given.

**DAVE MCMULLEN**  
STOUFFVILLE



## Just think what you could do with \$4.1 trillion

**M**any of you are working to recycle, reduce energy consumption, and improve the world for your families and neighbours. The collective impact of these many small efforts is making a big difference.

Just think what you could do with \$4.1 trillion.

That's how much the U.S. and 17 Western European countries are spending to bail out financial institutions involved in an economic crisis that began in the U.S. and soon reverberated around the world.

(The final amount will likely be a lot more. It's difficult to fathom such a large number, but consider that one trillion seconds is about 32,000 years.)

To top it off, most of the details are secret; we don't really know what the money is being used for – although it probably hasn't stopped your retirement savings funds from plummeting.

The effect on people in developing nations is even worse. Most of them didn't have savings to begin with, and now the economic crisis, coupled with the effects of the cli-

mate crisis – including drought and food shortages – is causing more of our human family to suffer from extreme poverty and joblessness.

Just think what they could do with \$4.1 trillion.

A report from the Institute for Policy Studies, *Skewed Priorities: How the Bailouts Dwarf Other Global Crisis Spending*, points out that the amount is 40 times what the U.S. and Europe are spending in developing nations on programs to deal with poverty (\$90.7 billion) and climate change (\$13.1 billion, none of it from the U.S.). In fact, the U.S. spent far more to bail out insurance firm AIG, \$152.5 billion, than all the countries together spent on developmental aid last year.

And what did the AIG executives do after getting the taxpayer-funded bailout? They celebrated, with a \$440,000 trip to a luxury spa resort. The cost of the trip is about what the U.S. spent on food aid last year to Lebanon, "a country struggling to recover from conflict", according to the IPS.

If we think we needn't worry about what happens to developing nations because it isn't affect-



David Suzuki

ing us, we should remind ourselves that, just as everything in nature is connected, so is everything in our global economic and political systems. Increased international job competition and reduced export opportunities are just two of the smaller impacts mentioned in the IPS report.

But the worst meltdown isn't of the global economy. Another report, *Climate Safety*, from the Public Interest Research Centre, shows that the Arctic's late-summer ice is melting much faster than scientists previously predicted and may disappear within three to seven years. The cascading consequences of such an event could be

catastrophic.

Just think what we could do with \$4.1 trillion!

Instead of giving companies these huge sums of money so they can continue business as usual, buying and selling, merging, and paying their executives obscene salaries and bonuses, we could put it toward renewable energy, sustainable urban planning, and research into ways to lessen the impact of climate change – things that really would stimulate economies.

But, as the world's nations meet at the UN Climate Change Conference in Poland this month, the focus remains on the false dichotomy of economy versus environment. Canada has continued to bolster its reputation as a country lacking in imagination and concern for the planet.

Environment Minister Jim Prentice told Alberta business leaders recently that, "We will not aggravate an already weakening economy in the name of environmental progress." His job is to protect the environment yet he sounds like the minister of finance!

But if Canada is hindering

progress, other nations are showing more enlightened leadership. French President Nicolas Sarkozy said before heading to Poland that nations must keep their commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

"Climate change is so important that we cannot use the financial and economic crisis as a pretext for dropping it," he said. Eminent economist Sir Nicholas Stern has already told us that meeting the challenge of climate change could cost about one per cent of annual GDP but doing nothing will destroy the global economy. Seems there's only one thing we can do, and it won't cost \$4.1 trillion.

As citizens, we can and must do everything possible to keep our finite world alive and healthy. Along with the small but important changes we are making in our own lives, we must also call on our leaders to stop downplaying the unequivocal science that tells us failing to quickly address the climate crisis will make the economic crisis seem like a minor blip in history.

We could tell them where to put that \$4.1 trillion.

### LETTERS POLICY

The Sun-Tribune welcomes your letters. All submissions must be less than 400 words and must include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The Sun-Tribune reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit for clarity and space.

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