

• OUR VIEW •

Let your children play

As parents, our first priority has become protecting our children.

We protect them from the monsters in their closet and from big dogs and even bigger spiders.

But many of us also protect them from perceived dangers and bumps, bruises, breaks and scrapes.

We may believe this is what's best for our children, but research is showing the opposite to be true.

Unstructured play-play with no time limits, no rules to follow and no adult instruction-has been either scheduled or shamed right out of many modern families.

In April, Winnipeg mom Jacqui Kendrick made the news after Manitoba Child and Family Services followed up on complaint about her children being unsupervised.

Kendrick said she regularly lets her children, aged two, five and 10, play in the fenced-in yard after school-and she's either with them or watching from the window.

Times have certainly changed.

Without getting nostalgic, many adults would agree that the way they raise their children today is far different than how they grew up.

That's not necessarily a bad thing. Children should wear helmets when riding their bikes around the neighbourhood and cellphones allow us to keep a closer eye on where they are, but the bubble wrapping of our children has gone too far.

Something as simple as sending your child into the backyard to play independently or with friends not only gets them up and moving, but also lets them use their imagination, problem-solving skills, risk assessment, social skills and boost self-esteem.

A child will find things outside to play with, use problem-solving skills when they decide what should come next, assess risk while climbing trees or balancing on a log and social skills are used to negotiate with friends while playing make believe.

If a child falls while balancing on that log, they're bound to learn a valuable lesson that will benefit them down the road. That lesson can't be taught through discussions.

They need to learn independence

The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada states there is now evidence that neural pathways in children's brains are influenced by and advanced in their development through the exploration, thinking skills, problem solving and language expression that occur during play.

Children have a natural curiosity so when given the ability to make choices while building, drawing or playing make believe, they are further developing cognitive, physical, social and emotional skills.



• LETTERS •

Economic plan an old message in modern jargon

Apparently, the Advisory Council on Economic Growth considers public-private partnerships an appropriate stimulus for a stagnant economy. Perhaps, but this view hides a biased assumption which is embraced by conservatives and neo-liberals alike: government-run organizations are inherently inefficient and need to be controlled by private sector managers.

One can be FOR public ownership without being AGAINST business when weighing the benefits of partnerships with businesses making profits from providing needed services. However, the

low-hanging fruits for proponents of privatization are government-run businesses which return handsome profit to the public purse - like the LCBO, Hydro, and before them the 407ETR. The higher fruit is left for government (taxpayers) to underwrite when huge cost overruns are incurred by large projects.

Judging by his favourable disposition toward pipelines and trade deals, Trudeau risks being seen as sacrificing Canada to the almighty dollar Harper supposedly forswore. It is fair to ask, then, whether he is a visionary of 21st-century economics, or a modern liberal polishing 19th-century laissez-faire economics - which reduces Ottawa's economic plan to an old

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message in neo-liberal jargon.

We hope that he is a visionary, because no sensible citizen would object to harnessing private sector energy to drive Canada's faltering economy, especially when the sector is sitting on huge reserves and the "world is awash with money". Indeed, if the economic cart is to be propelled by the "flywheel" of industry, it still needs to be led by the proverbial horse - government - in a desirable direction.

We would welcome Trudeau steering the business sector in the direction of public inter-

est. Partnerships can yield positive returns for society only when they do not hoard profits for shareholders and investors while robbing workers and taxpayers.

On behalf of all Canadians, Trudeau should direct partnering businesses to be socially responsible. Since they benefit from government investments in physical and social infrastructure, they should reciprocate by generously sharing profits with society - for the common good.

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