

Messenger EDITORIAL

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Ottawa Police Service takes action against hate

We like to think that we, as Canadians, and as residents of the City of Ottawa, are better than this. But we are not.

Racism, Anti-Semitism, Muslim-phobia and hatred toward the LGBTQ community have all been trending upward in our city over the last few years. We have seen it just in the last two weeks with the hate-motivated incident at the National Holocaust Monument in Ottawa. We saw it again last week with the vandalism of an Indigenous painting at Algonquin College.

The Ottawa Police Service is taking action.

The OPS has reintroduced a section specifically focused on Hate Crimes, which will further enhance changes it made to its online reporting system that make it easier for residents to report hate-motivated incidents.

The OPS has always had officers trained and focused on hate crime investigations but this decision adds more resources and centralizes this important investigative section.

“As a result of community and stakeholder feedback, we’re adding two new Hate Crime investigators to the Security Intelligence Section to help identify trends and community safety concerns,” said Chief Sloly said. “We re-evaluated how we accepted hate-motivated incidents from the public and we know that responding to incidents of hate will have a far-reaching impact on the well-being of our communities.”

Officers in the Hate Crime Section will monitor and triage all incoming reports to ensure a timely, consistent and effective response to all hate-motivated incidents in the city. The section will focus on the prevention of hate-motivated incidents through public education, outreach, and the development of intelligence to address extremism. It partners with the province’s Community Safety and Well-Being plan (CSWB), and includes sharing of information with other police services in the Nation’s Capital.

“We know that hate motivated crimes are often under-reported,” said Chief Sloly said. “We want people to know that we take such incidents seriously and we are here to help.”

In 2019, Ottawa received 110 reports of Hate Crime, up from 104 in 2018 and 95 in 2017.

In 2017, the OPS introduced a new method for reporting any hate-motivated incident online at ottawapolice.ca/onlinereporting. This was put in place so that family members or friends could assist those who were experiencing language or other barriers file a report in the comfort of their own homes.

“In the past, any hate-motivated incident, like racist graffiti, had to be submitted by either the business or property owner,” said Chief Sloly said. “But with this new reporting system, anyone can report a hate motivated incident. This will help us address community concerns quicker.”

Sorry folks, Wally World is closed

Steven and I pulled into Magnetic Hill. It was the last stop before we left Moncton on our recent roadie to Sackville, New Brunswick. It was a kind of stepfather-stepson trip as we visited Mount Allison University, the school he has committed to going next year.

We listened to the GPS and drove into what appeared to be a snow-covered starter kit of a theme park. It was deserted. I laughed and looked at Steven, and there was only one thing I could think of saying to him.

“Sorry folks, Wally World is closed. The moose out front shoulda told ya.”

We both laughed.

We figured we had to see it on the way home. I mean, we are Canadian, and we had never been to Moncton before. How could we not see it? And isn’t Magnetic Hill even in a Stompin’ Tom song?

“Maybe they turn the magnet off for the winter,” I told him in my signature turn of mocking sarcasm. “Maybe it’s like one of those giant horse shoe-shaped magnets like the one Wile E. Coyote ordered from Acme when he was trying to catch the Roadrunner, and they have some guy turning it off and on.”

We stayed at the luxurious Hampton Inn in Moncton, which always includes free wi-fi and free breakfast the following morning. The 20-something Harry Potter fanatics working behind the counter were excited the previous day when I asked them about Magnetic Hill. Their inner-Moncton blossomed as they could not wait to tell us about this marvel of nature. We were only about two kilometres away.

“It’s kind of cool,” the young man behind the counter said. “It’s an optical illusion that makes you think you are rolling up hill.”

The girl beside him interrupted him.

“Don’t tell them,” she urgently said through a face filled with panic. “You’re going to ruin it for them.”

Too late. Rrrrrreeeeeaaarrrrrr. The cat was out of the bag.

“I can’t believe you told me and wrecked it for me,” I told the guy at the counter, who I think thought I was serious. “You may as well have gone back in time 40 years and told me Darth Vader was Luke Skywalker’s father. You may as well have told me the chick in the Crying Game is really a dude. How are we going to experience Magnetic Hill now that you have told us it’s all smoke and mirrors?”

Even in the winter, you can drive into the Magnetic Hill Park, even though it is snow covered and everything is closed for the winter. We decided to drive around, and even contemplated taking a test drive up, or down, or whatever, the hill.

“It’s snowing and the roads are icy,” Steven observed. “Do you think we could slide up the hill?”

I kind of thought that might freak me out, and I wasn’t willing to take that chance.

I told him the story about working at a sports collectibles convention in Atlanta back around the turn of the century. One of the autographed guests was a retired baseball player who had played in the 1960s and 1970s. He told us the story of an old teammate who wouldn’t get on a flight from Atlanta to St. Louis because the flight left at 5:30 p.m. and arrived at 5:15 p.m.

“I ain’t getting on no time machine,” he told his teammates, totally not grasping the concept of Atlanta being on Eastern time and St. Louis being on Central time. The fact that Atlanta was in the National League West Division and St. Louis was in the East really complicated the situation.

“I don’t think Magnetic Hill will freak us out the way that baseball player was freaked out,” I explained to him. “But what if the magnet pulls us into a dark forest filled with centaurs or something creepy like that. I’m responsible for you. I can’t risk it.”

We ripped across New Brunswick, crossed the Quebec border, and found ourselves at a Subway near St-Louis-de-Ha!-Ha! It was too dark to take a selfie by the sign. I am sure everyone who has ever driven through there has had to have their picture taken with that sign.

Geez, no Magnetic Hill, no St-Louis-de-Selfie!, what kind of road trip was this?

“You know, our quest for weird Canadian touristy stuff could have been a lot worse,” I told him.

“How?” he replied.

“Well, there’s now a bridge that connects Prince Edward Island to the other Maritime provinces,” I explained. “We could have gone to Avonlea Village.”

He had no idea what Avonlea Village was.

“It’s a recreation of the town where Anne of Green Gables is from,” I told him.

“Who?”

“Anne of Green Gables.”

“The Ginge chick that CBC keeps making all these dumb shows about.”

He said he would rather stab himself in the eye than visit Avonlea Village.

Our day at Magnetic Hill will come. I doubt that we’ll hit Avonlea, though. I told Steven to be proud of the great Canadian tourist destinations he has already seen. The giant nickel in Sudbury was one. The giant apple along the 401 in Port Colborne was another. And we can still add the world’s largest axe from Nackawick, NB and the world’s largest fiddle in Sydney, NS to our list of must see attractions for the next trip.

Or we could just fly.

We both liked that option.

FROM THE OTHER SIDE

Jeffrey Morris



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SERVING MANOTICK AND SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES
IN OSGOODE, RIDEAU AND SOUTH GLOUCESTER

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Letters to the Editor welcome – email to newsfile@bellnet.ca

The Messenger EDITORIAL

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Will Canada ever pay off the cost of COVID-19?

It has become routine for Canadians to listen to the daily national COVID-19 briefing. We wait to learn about the current state of affairs and whose turn it is to receive financial aid. A million here, a billion there.

Very few have focused on the financial aftermath of the flatten-the-curve strategies taken by governments.

What has been revealed are the many real public policy challenges that have been percolating under the surface of our social media utopia. Shaken hard back to reality have been things that we have taken for granted, such as freedom of physical assembly, freedom of mobility, the education curriculum, workplace environments, financial security, debt levels and our economic independence.

The pre-COVID-19 national debt was approximately \$685.5 billion. The post-virus national debt is estimated to reach more than \$900 billion.

Based on the Canadian government's fiscal performance over its existence, that debt will never be paid.

Suppose Canada is lucky enough to survive another 250 years, to pay off \$900 billion (not accounting for interest or inflation). The government would need to pay approximately \$3.8 billion every year for 250 years. Or, to pay off the debt in say 80 or 85 years, the government would need to pay at least \$10 billion a year.

When a government defaults on its unsustainable debt, it causes many spillover effects. These include:

- a drop in economic growth of between two and six per cent a year, which results in four to 12 per cent more unemployment;
- trade volumes fall by about seven per cent a year for 10 or more years;
- foreign direct investment drops up to two per cent of gross domestic product;
- the stock market value of domestic business significantly reduces, in particular for exporters;
- domestic businesses find it more difficult to access foreign capital markets;
- the cost of borrowing increases, as does the cost of imported inputs.
- All of this lowers economic growth even more.

In addition, government defaults harm banking and other institutions that hold large amounts of government debt. This became quite apparent during the Eurozone crisis. Default risk in economies with large financial sectors (like Canada) can result in credit shortages and a banking crisis.

The financial sector includes major bondholders, such as investment funds (holding our life savings) and pension funds.

Who cares?

It depends how you view your future, and that of your children and grandchildren, or your parents' or grandparents' future.

It might be time to seriously contemplate how to flatten the debt curve once we get through flattening the COVID-19 one.

Troy Media. Gerard A. Lucyshyn is the vice-president of research and a senior fellow with the Frontier Centre for Public Policy.

A post-pandemic pint with pals

I had this dream.

It was 20 minutes into the future.

The virus was defeated. The pandemic was over. Everyone was officially cured and vaccinated.

So what was I going to do?

I was somehow aware that it was a dream but decided to just go with it rather than jolt awake. I have been trying to stop jolting myself awake ever since the Melatonin nightmare. That was the one where the talking goat was trying to eat my hand while I was fighting to unlock the door.

I haven't taken Melatonin since. I would rather be awake all night.

I guess the dream was sparked by the fact that Friday was supposed to be the first Red-Blacks preseason game of the year. But instead of being at the game with G-Clock and Spark and the rest of the boys, I was at home, falling asleep watching reruns of CSI Miami and irritating the Diva by trying to talk like David Caruso as Horatio Caine.

I fell asleep again. And by this point, it was only 19 minutes into the future.

In my dream, the pandemic had ended. I turned off CSI Miami reruns and emerged from my basement.

Whatever am I going to do?

The first thing I did was walk by the bathroom in the hallway without washing my hands. It was great. My hands felt rejuvenated and alive rather than wrinkled and rubbed raw by the vigorous use of soap and hand sanitizer.

The second thing I did was walk over to the fridge to look at the calendar. I had this urge to know what day it was. I had been drifting in and out of any awareness of the clock or calendar for what seemed like an eternity.

"It's Monday," I told myself. "But is it Monday the first? Or is it Monday the eighth?"

I went to the door to get my shoes.

"Where are you going?" the Diva inquired from upstairs.

"I'm walking to the hardware store," I replied.

I hadn't been to the hardware store in months. I put on my shoes, ignored my medical mask and disregarded the latex gloves, and headed out the door.

When I got there, there was a line-up to get into the store. I stood in it. I loved being in line. The person in front of me was only about two feet away. I suppressed a bit of a cough and sneezed into my elbow. No one thought twice about it. No one pointed me to a testing lab. No one gave me the "You sneezed so I'm calling 9-1-1 and my lawyer" death stare.

When I got into the store, I made a bee

line for the green spray paint. Everyone was thinking the same thing. I saw my neighbour in the store.

"Why is everyone after green spray paint?" he asked. "Is green spray paint like the new toilet paper or something?"

"No," I replied. "We're all just trying to erase the white circles we had to paint on our lawns so that people who came over would know where to stand."

He said something back, but I didn't quite catch what it was.

"I'm sorry, could you repeat that?" I asked. "I am not used to having people talk to me in live

time. I guess I'm used to communicating with people on Zoom or on Facetime and it's kind of choppy and there is always seems to be a one or two second delay."

We both got what we needed, stood in line again, and paid for our purchases using cash and not having to talk to the cashier through a plexiglass barrier.

"Hey, I've got an idea," I said to him as we were leaving the store. "Do you want to go for a beer?"

He looked at me, puzzled but excited.

"Do you mean," he started, "you want to, like, actually go into the pub and sit down at the bar or at a table, and talk to actual people, and have a beer?"

"Totally," I said. "We can watch sports and share some wings and nachos. We can watch the game and high five each other when our team scores. Maybe we might even meet some new people and, get this, shake hands with them."

When we got to the pub, I went to the bathroom. I spun the toilet paper dispenser like I was a contestant in the Price is Right Showcase Showdown. Toilet paper was flying through my stall like I had just been named the Super Bowl MVP.

I got back to our table, which had a number of baskets of chips and salsa and a few pitchers of beer. Suddenly, I jolted awake in a cold sweat, gasping in a panic.

"Babes," the Diva said. "You're having a bad dream. What happened?"

"The pandemic was over," I told her, shaking. "I went out for a beer with the boys."

"What's so bad about that?" she asked.

"They were double dipping their chips into the salsa," I said. "Double dipping was never acceptable before the pandemic, and it certainly won't be an accepted practice afterward."

She rolled her eyes.

"Go back to sleep," she said.

"I can't," I said. "The talking goat might be waiting for me."

She rolled over.

"You're weird."

"I'm putting classic baseball on."

"Of course you are. Good night."

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Unemployment spike may trigger rethink of EI program

The spike in unemployment across Canada due to the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered changes in the employment insurance (EI) program. And those changes could lead to significant problems.

When unemployment grows in any of the country's 62 EI regions, eligibility and benefits change along with it. Due to the COVID-19 recession, the number of weeks required to access the program has fallen and the number of weeks of benefits has increased.

A new study by the Fraser Institute sheds more light on these changes. For example, at this time last year, a worker in Halifax had to work 700 hours to access 14 weeks of benefits. If current unemployment levels hold (calculations are made on a three-month rolling average), today that same worker in Halifax will need to work only 420 hours to access 26 weeks of benefits.

What's wrong with increased benefits in a time of crisis?

Income stabilization is certainly a worthy goal and we know that programs such as EI can act as "automatic stabilizers," which help support displaced workers during a recession. However, there are reasons why recent developments should concern Atlantic Canadians.

Regional EI benefits were introduced in Atlantic Canada in 1971, followed by a prolonged period of high unemployment – and soaring job vacancies. Perhaps because of the perverse incentives within the program, many workers preferred to remain on EI rather than seek employment.

This problem still exists and will likely be exacerbated by the COVID-19-related unemployment spike.

If extended EI benefits become the norm across the country, and they have the same effect on the rest of the nation as they do in Atlantic Canada, the damage to the country's labour markets would be enormous.

Another national concern is the solvency of the EI program itself. One estimate in the study shows how the EI program could run a deficit of many billions of dollars this year. If so, it would be yet another fiscal problem for the federal government, which predicts a massive deficit this year and historic levels of debt.

An EI crisis would likely precipitate a rethink of the program.

Now that Atlantic Canada-level benefits are available nationwide (at least for now), reform could happen, either due to insolvency or through changing attitudes toward the program.

Widespread unemployment across the country has triggered a massive expansion of the eligibility and generosity of Canada's EI program. Atlantic Canada has been through this before.

Atlantic Canadians and Canadians alike should understand the potential consequences of this expansion and what it may mean in the near future.

Troy Media – Alex Whalen and Fred McMahon are analysts at the Fraser Institute

Fear and loathing in Rivière-du-Loup

We have all had memorable road trips, but with the pandemic, who knows when we will be able to go on a long journey again? I was thinking about my best road trips last week, but then I kept thinking about the worst one. It happened 10 years ago..

The following events happened between Thurs., May 27 and Fri., May 28, 2010.

May 27, 10:30 a.m. – I call the court house in Rivière-du-Loup, QC. "You will be in court at nine o'clock tirty," says the clerk in her thick French accent. I was heading there to fight a speeding ticket of doing 120 in a 70 zone on the highway. I had my cruise control set at 110 and the speed limit was 100. I had to fight this.

May 27, 3:15 p.m. – I fill up the Arctic Stallion and look at the three original tires that have not exploded on the highway yet. They are looking bald and nasty. Sheila the Australian GPS lady tells me it's a seven-hour drive.

May 27, 6:12 p.m. – I am stuck in Montreal. "Traffic ahead," Sheila says in her Aussie accent. Thanks Tips. The minimum speed limit is 60 kmh. I am going three.

May 27, 9:44 p.m. – I am somewhere past Drummondville in R.R. 2 Ville de Nowhere. Bang, pop, loud shaking. Mon Dieu, I thought. Mon tire a blasté. I remember that Kia has a 24-hour roadside assistance program.

May 27, 10:14 p.m. – Okay, this is awkward. I have to go to the bathroom. I can tell by the gurgling in my stomach that this is not going to go well. I am directly under a streetlight as I am pulled over on the highway. There is a well-lit area for about 30 feet, then a chain link fence, and then a well-lit industrial park and a bunch of auto dealerships. Are you kidding me? I am driving through the woods for 700 km, and the one moment I have the runs I am stuck in the most well-lit, unprivate stretch of highway in Canada.

May 27, 10:18 p.m. – I can't wait anymore. I go back to the fence. Squat, and do my thing. Cars are honking their horns as they go by. That wasn't the worse part of the ordeal. Not having toilet paper was. Thank goodness for the bundle of newspapers I had. Not exactly Cottonelle.

May 27, 11:02 p.m. – A tow truck shows up. Maxime knows one sentence in English. "I not speak English," he says. Maxime had to use a sledge hammer to get the remnants of the exploding tire off the car. I still had more than 300 km to go but, evidently, the spare is only good for 100

km and I can only go 60. I prayed.

May 28, 4 a.m. – I pulled into to Rivière-du-Loup. There is a Canadian Tire two kilometres from the courthouse. I pulled in, set my cell phone alarm clock for seven o'clock tirty, and slept in the car.

May 28, 8 a.m. – I take my clothes, toothbrush and razor to McDonald's across the road and pull myself together in the men's room. I then struggle through

the language barrier as I ask for new tires. I start walking to the courthouse.

May 28, 9:30 a.m. – It's nine o'clock tirty. The cop who ticketed me is there and he brought two cops with him. I'm

not feeling good about this. They have easels and charts and graphs. I'm screwed.

May 28, 9:56 a.m. – They call my name, and I approach the bench. I am informed that the translator did not show up, and the court will have a break.

May 28, 10:20 a.m. – We are called back in. No translator. The clerk – Miss nine o'clock tirty herself – calls me into a side room. I am told that there will be no trial today, and instead of having to come all the way back, I am going to be made an offer. The ticket will be reduced to 125 in a 100 zone instead of 125 in a 70 zone. "Two points, \$90 fine," she said. Where do I sign?

May 28, 11:03 a.m. – I get to the cashier at Canadian Tire. OMG! Who is in line in front of me but le grand Officeur, Monsieur Ouellette, himself. He sees me, and he is furious. He looks me in the eyes and points in my face. "I will be watching you all the way home," he said. What was he doing at Canadian Tire anyway? Wouldn't the rage medication be at Jean Coutu?

May 28, 11:05 a.m. – I pull out of the parking lot of Canadian Tire, and from out of nowhere, Monsieur Ouellette, pulls out and is tailing me. I am ready to crap myself. Even worse than the night before. I glance in the back. I still have lots of newspapers.

May 28, 11:23 a.m. – I hear a woop from the police car siren, see his lights flash, and he turns around at a U-Turn in the highway. So long, arsehole.

May 28, 12:35 p.m. – I stop for gas and head into A&W. I'm not even out of the parking lot yet and I am covered from head to toe in ketchup stains. So predictable.

May 28, 6:58 p.m. – I arrive home, having made sure that I did not go any faster than 102 kmh during any stretch of the drive home.

I think if I ever go to Nova Scotia again, I will drive on the American side.

FROM THE OTHER SIDE

Jeffrey Morris



Messenger newspaper masthead with contact information and logos for OCTIA and CNA.