

Waste and Risk Management

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A few decades ago, along the Saskatchewan River systems, human habitation consisted of small Prairie cities and sparsely-populated towns and villages. Mega-farms, and oil and gas exploration and production emerged in this era. In 1955, at Montebello Quebec, provincial and federal bureaucrats met to discuss what evolved slowly into Environment Canada and its equivalent offices in the provinces. Waste and risk management was not a song we could sing around a campfire. At that time period, trappers, fishermen and gatherers were speaking about management. Bureaucrats, always the last to understand, laughed at them openly and often. Scientists were listening till they understood the magnitude of the country-wide problem. As I write, they are in for some collective punishment. Some scientists are seeing their lives' work shelved, trashed. If they are not being shown the door, they have work titles, but no program monies. The American Republicanism that is the operating engine of this present federal government is welcomed, not noticed or ignored by voters who like the turn of events. There are so much Machiavellian shenanigans being touted as great strategies, if we only listen to commentaries, we lose sight of the looming and arrived problems.

What are we talking about in waste and risk management? Every day, mega tons of waste products are causing undue risk in our environment. The Saskatchewan Rivers have flooded, and numerous creeks, streams and lakes are overflowing their banks. The trappers, fishermen, and tour operators witnessed a toxic sludge going inland and staying there. There is insurance compensation, but there are no plans to address the problems that wash up on the land. The mega ugly chemicals are in there. Gene-altering substances swim along undisturbed. Risk management in flood situations is absent.

Water level management levels at dams could not be addressed adequately. Most years, it looks haphazard and very selective for designated areas of interest. A flood plain will fill with water from spring run off and glacier meltdowns. What has become alarming is the content of unknown substances. Add up the overall catastrophic, damaging, but unknown changes in the water, and we have a problem on earth.

The next problem we face is government enamoured with the sound of making money. I hear that hedge fund brokers are now betting on coffee when they start betting on the price of corn that those chickens will sell like gold bars. There are no checks; therefore, there is no balance in that activity. The core of taxpayers remains with the middle class and the working poor. We are all moving into the working poor taxpayer side when a government goes too far to the right. That is our present situation.

The next problem is downright sad. The reading comprehension levels of over half of Canadians is that of the barely literate. They cannot analyze any subject matter. The federal government knows this. All of a sudden, the Queen's portrait is showing up in government offices. The monarchists are so pleased that they do not notice how close this government has moved in with Americanism. While this government follows and obeys Americanism, it is laughing at the monarchists because so little has to be done to impress them. The Canadian press is also following that line. They are willing to sound and look like fools to keep their jobs. They are so pitiful.

The only place where our hope might come is among the First Nations and the Métis, and Inuit organizations. If they have not forgotten what the land and water gives, we also know what happens when it is too far gone to be useful. We can recall our cautionary tales and legends that inform us what happens when we become careless and stupid. We are eighty per cent water and we live on the land. Indigenous peoples can read and listen to their environments and interpret what the inanimate beings are telling us. We are stressing out our environment because we use it without thinking of managing our waste products from our industrial activity. We are no good at risk management even for ourselves; we are drowning ourselves out of existence.

Having written all the above, there are very good people out there who are knowledgeable, capable, and can make a difference. We do have a very cynical and calculating government in power. But we know who they are. They are in power for the next four years; how they will be contained so that they do not damage us out of existence will require steadfastness about basic principles of sustaining life.

For Christians, the basic call to consciousness was articulated by St. Thomas Aquinas. We are responsible for our actions. St. Francis of Assisi, who saw the great thunder bird, reacted to the accumulation of material goods by giving back all the goods that his father's accumulated fortune had given him. He was promptly disowned, and we have to look hard for his father's name. The discovery of the riches of the world did not bring out the best in its European adventurers. Today, European stock markets, banks, and money houses are scared for their money. They certainly are not thinking of the people that depend on them to keep the money safe so they can buy food and shelter. We are running out of affordable goods because we have finite resources to make them. That seems self-evident. On the altar of total and rapid consumption, we risk the lives of entire populations of human, animal and inanimate beings. If I look at advertised goods there is no evidence we are rushing towards a cliff. But if you look really close you see pharmacies and other drug dealers making atom bomb businesses to keep us sedated and numb to various sources of pain and misery. It is happening in real time.

What about risk management since we are doing so well at making waste? It seems so simple, don't mess with the water supply, watch what you consume, and do not fill your house with unnecessary items. Support the arts: buy a book that will keep you busy for a couple hours. Buy Aboriginal art, it covers walls. The colours will make you happy. Buy fewer toys that do not involve using imagination. Use your brain, it is with you all the time, use it. Musicians can bring out the best in human activity. If you are genuinely tired from activity, you will sleep better. My dad, the trapper and fisherman, recruited our youngest sister Donna to sit with him to listen and watch Oscar Peterson play the piano. Sharing music with us was dad's way to impart an appreciation for the

arts. It worked, and it did not cost a lot of money. Storytelling is the use of memory to invoke the best of human traits. Kindness and compassion can be learned that way. You can raise a good scientist if you pass on environmental concerns. They will not use their discoveries to be hijacked for landfill material. The basic call to consciousness is for everybody.

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