

Bill Rea ? I hate tax time

I need a break, so I'm taking one.

I'm sitting in the basement of my home Friday night, watching the Blue Jays blow another one, but I've barely been paying any attention. I am aware that my wife has been channel-hopping between the Jays and the hockey game between Montreal and the Rangers, which is going a bit better, from a Canadian point of view.

What I've really been concentrating on is my income tax. Justin Trudeau and the bureaucrats who work for him are expecting a full accounting of my financial situation throughout 2016 by the end of the month. Pardon me while I editorialize a bit. I'll try to keep it clean.

I'm one of those guys who generally enjoys messing about with figures, and that essentially is what filling out an income tax return involves. But it is possible to OD on just about anything, as I have been learning the hard way.

I took last Thursday off (I'll pause for a minute while you all re-read that last sentence, and shake your heads in disbelief at the thought that I actually took some time off). My wife and I spent the day in Muskoka, but it wasn't all down time. I spent much of the day fussing about with a T1 General, with all sorts of paperwork scattered about the table at which I was working. Beth read a book. In the evening, she channel-hopped between the Leafs and the Jays. I lost myself in numbers, although I was aware that neither game ended on a particularly positive note.

We came home Friday morning, and once the car was unloaded, I had to head to the office to address the work that I didn't get done the previous day. But I got home in time to watch the ball game, and slave away on my financial documents.

I am currently writing these words because my mind needed some form of diversion. Like I stated at the top, I need a break.

I realize that just about all of you folks reading these words are going through roughly the same experience (ordeal), or have recently gone through it (some of you are a little faster off the mark than I).

Some people have relatively simple returns to fill out, but I am not in that group.

I have investments. I have been setting aside portions of every paycheque I have received for about the last 25 years for investments. Putting things in some perspective, as investors go, I'm pretty well small potatoes. But they have been paying off over the years, with the numbers gradually growing. They are amounting to something rather nice, but not stupendous. I am, after all, still working, and for a reason. But thoughts of retirement do pop into my head occasionally, and I am very mindful that my 60th birthday is now a matter of months away. I expect those investments, such that they are, will be there to supplement my lifestyle when I become a dependent of Trudeau and company.

Granted, I have been planning for retirement since I entered the workforce almost 40 years ago. My late parents always nagged me to make sure I maxed out on my RRSP contributions every year, and I have always been very glad they did. That was a very good habit to get into. And since RRSP contributions aren't taxable, that was one line of the returned I filled in with a grin. As well, I'm a swell enough guy to make regular charitable donations, and that helps deal with the income tax burden. True, it doesn't make a huge difference, but I have been on this planet long enough to appreciate the wisdom of the words "every little bit helps."

I do a lot of driving in the course of my job, and the government, very accommodatingly, lets me claim the costs of keeping my car on the road. That includes gas, maintenance, insurance, getting the sticker for my licence plate, etc. But I also have to calculate how much of my driving is work related. For example, driving to and from my office every day is not considered a work-related expense. But there are a couple of Thursday mornings every month when I have to drive to the Peel Regional offices in Brampton to cover a council meeting, and I consider that trip work related. It involves a bit of estimating, but I'm confident I'm not skimping on Justin. It is true that these forms can be complicated, but some people are better at puzzling them out than others. My late mother spent several years working for a chartered accountant. Among other things, she was responsible for payroll in the office. Thus she was well versed in tax law. I once wrote in a column that she could have lectured the Finance Minister (it was Paul Martin in those days) on tax law, and received a proper bawling-out for my pains. But she did enjoy emerging herself in such matters, and used to insist on seeing my documents. I used to go along with it because my mother told me to. But I had already gone through the process and come up with my own figures. I was always impressed with her ability to find a few extra bucks to go into my refund cheque. My mother has been gone for several years, so I've had to do things on my own. I guess I do okay. I haven't had to do time for evasion, yet.

But I have a job to do. The break's over. The Jays lost. The Habs won. Beth fell asleep on the couch. Enough of me missing my mommy. I've got about two weeks to finish this job.

Man, I hate this time of year!

