

National Affairs by Claire Hoy ? They've only themselves to blame

When Hurricanes Harvey and Irma were spreading death and destruction through the Caribbean on their way to Texas, Florida and other states, my youngest son and his boss were in the Bahamas on business.

Hearing of the impending disaster ? which, as it turned out, actually steered clear of the Bahamas ? they cancelled some meetings and booked an earlier flight back to Toronto.

That seems the sensible and responsible thing to do.

Yet, there were many Canadians who, despite having several days' warning of the impending disaster, refused to look after themselves and ended up getting caught in Irma's mighty wrath, spending a few harried days desperately trying to get off the various islands.

Many of these Canadians ? who were whining about a slow government response in the aftermath of the hurricane ? were in the Caribbean because tourist rates are lower at this time of year. Why is that, you ask? Because it's hurricane season, that's why.

The federal Liberals can be ? and should be ? taken to task for a lot of things. But those Canadians and their families who were crying the blues about the government not doing enough to rescue them from their own folly have no case at all against the government. None.

It's not Ottawa's job to save tourists from their own stupidity. Unlike the people who live in these islands ? most of whom are too poor to escape the storm's devastation and have to stay there and struggle on ? all these whining tourists are now back at home and safe from the ravages of hurricanes.

Mind you, when the Liberals were in opposition, they too yelled at the Tory government for being slow off the mark to rescue Canadians who had gotten themselves into a precarious situation, so it's tougher now for them to claim that it's not the government's job to save every Canadian who gets into trouble somewhere in the world.

It's all part of an unfortunate trend these days for people to turn to government as the answer to everything. It's not.

And while we're on the subject of hurricanes ? hardly a surprise during the annual hurricane season ? it didn't take long for the promoters of climate change (as if climate hasn't always been changeable, for heaven's sake) to claim that Irma and the other hurricanes are a sure sign that people are endangering the planet.

They love to claim that their fears of global climate change caused by human activity are completely science-based.

Well, okay then. Here's some science. Late last month, the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced that it is ?premature to conclude that human activities ? and particularly greenhouse gas emissions that cause global warming ? have already had a detectable impact on Atlantic hurricane or global tropical cyclone activity.?

In one of his frequent letters to the Toronto Star, Pav Penna of Georgetown also points out that ?hurricane frequency in North America has been declining ? hurricanes Irma and Harvey followed an unprecedented 12-year drought in major hurricane activity.

As for the severity of U.S. storms, Irma ranked seventh and Harvey ranked 18th.?

As a regular visitor to Texas ? where my stepdaughter and her family lost their house and a car to Harvey in Houston ? I've been many times to Galveston. That's the city on the coast where more than a 100 years ago (long before anybody had turned normal human activity into a threat to the planet) a category five hurricane killed more than 5,000 people. You can still see the results of that storm today.

And nothing on this side of the ocean, of course, compares to the 1970 cyclone in Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) which killed more than 300,000 people.

There is no doubt that the current breathless wall-to-wall media coverage of storms appears to make them more frequent and bigger than they really are. (Speaking of such coverage, that's all the more reason any Canadian in the storm paths had plenty of time to get out of the way.)

It's truly amazing that a series of storms can kill so many people and leave hundreds of thousands of people homeless and struggling to meet the basic necessities of life, and all a bunch of spoiled Canadians and their families can think of is how the government let them down by not immediately doing what they should have done for themselves.

Typically, alas, rather than tell the whiners to get lost, the government officials fell over each other trying to placate the whiners. Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland even went to the airport to greet some of them and assure them the government was doing all it could to help them.

And we wonder why people think government should be all things to all people. Geez.

