

Recognizing the 'duck' in the room

by Mark Pavilons

Sometimes a duck is just a duck.

By that I mean that sometimes, maybe more often than not, things are just as they appear.

Unlike the message on the passenger side mirror on our vehicles, things can appear just as they are. While it's fun to think about, there are few real conspiracy theories out there. But the key is to identify and recognize that waddling waterfowl.

Like a lit fuse on a stick of dynamite, information, and misinformation, spread very quickly these days. Dig deep and you'll likely find the truth is rather simple.

One morning, an announcement is made by the government. By lunch time, there are messages of support and edicts about pending doom. Isn't it peculiar that the timing of this or that coincides with the other? Maybe. Maybe it's just a coincidence. Maybe it has to do with scheduling and availability. Maybe the final details aren't ready. Maybe the paper shredder is jammed.

There are so many events, even miniscule moments, that take place in any given day, it's a wonder we all make it through a work week!

The provincial government is taking a lot of heat lately on its policies, cutbacks and program changes. They are being accused of getting new policies to the table without thinking them through. They reverse some of their decisions and perhaps are second-guessing themselves from time to time.

But isn't that the beauty of a modern democracy? Most of us are used to change by now, and we're all keenly aware how things can change overnight. What's wrong with reversing a decision to consider options?

'Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future,' John F. Kennedy once said.

In our society, we elect a group of people to represent us, protect our rights, serve our needs, keep us healthy and provide essential services. The duly elected politicians and their related bureaucracies work towards all of these things. We place our trust in them to figure things out and find the least disruptive path.

Note my words. There is never a perfect solution, only options, plans, directives and strategies. If it were easy to eliminate the debt and deficit, it would have been done already. If it were painless to improve education and health care to everyone's satisfaction, we'd all be dancing in the streets.

Where people are involved there are bound to be hiccups, successes and failures. There will be mistakes, ill-advised moves and ramifications. It's not only natural, but it's to be expected.

We can't expect perfection and total accuracy from a group of imperfect human beings. None of us are perfect and most of us think we know it all.

In my line of work I absorb tons of information on a daily basis. I'm well informed and I'm aware of all the current issues. 'But does that make me an expert?' Not all.

I digest government decisions and policies on a weekly basis, at all levels. And then I review the critiques and opposition to those very decisions. I have learned, many moons ago, that critics have their own vested interests. They pick and choose just what to argue

about.

The opponents to the Province's recent move to sever ties with The Beer Store are largely the conglomerates themselves, who actually own The Beer Store. Will sales of beer in corner stores eat into their profits? Maybe, but who cares? Will it result in job losses? Doubtful. If it does, then the greedy conglomerates are to blame, not the government. Will it result in widespread drunkenness and bad behaviour? Only time will tell, but the world didn't end when marijuana became legal.

A can of beer is just a can of beer.

The Toronto District School Board criticized the government for education cuts, and has made many changes to try to mitigate the impacts on their budget. When you examine the little things, like spending \$6 million to upgrade cell phones, the picture changes. I don't know whether these expenses are justified or not. It's about perspective juggling necessity with luxury, must-haves with would-likes.

Education is controlled by the Province. Tax dollars are distributed to the school boards who, like municipalities, should spend within their means. They need to keep their own houses in order and yet they don't seem to answer to anyone, and criticize the very body (government) that keeps them afloat.

Sure, costs rise and things get more expensive year after year. Every single working Ontarian knows this, but they can't dump on their boss and protest when they don't get a raise or can't afford the gas to get to work. People don't have ever-expanding budgets year over year.

A smart board is just a smart board, but it's an expensive classroom tool today.

In our liberal, watchdog society, we put everything under the microscope, and blather on about how wrong everything is.

Yes, we feel for parents of autistic children who struggle to accommodate their kids. The government has changed its policy somewhat to reflect the need.

My heart goes out to those who have to choose between food and rent. We are all well aware of the cost of living these days.

In a perfect world, everyone would get what they need, when they need it. It's something I believe we, as a global society, should work towards.

'From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs' was a phrase popularized back in 1875 by none other than Karl Marx.

We've been struggling with the inequities of capitalism for more than 100 years and it seems the divide between rich and poor, the haves and have-nots, remains.

If it walks like a duck, it must be a bureaucrat!