

## Just how much bigger should everything get?

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Here in North America, we're living fairly well.

There was a time in our history where a man's stomach was the gauge of his wealth and importance. The bigger he was, the more status he held.

Using that scale, I'm a bloody millionaire!

Gluttony is one of the original deadly sins, but it has another meaning. It relates to an inordinate desire that goes above reason and good moral virtue.

Well, that leaves the gates wide open for eternal damnation for many of my fellow humans!

When I think of 'gluttony' I too, think of excess and waste and over-the-top extravagance.

In some ways, we're all guilty of this and the evidence is all around us. In fact, it's where we live.

In North America, our houses are getting bigger, and bigger, and bigger.

The passage from 'The Lorax' by Dr. Seuss springs to mind when the man says he's 'figgering on biggering, and biggering and biggering ...'.

In typical GTA subdivisions, new homes are roughly 2,500 square feet, 50 per cent larger than those in the late 1970s. For those who recall, most houses today are the size of the Brady Bunch home, which comfortably fit two families.

As homes grew, the lots they sit on have actually gotten smaller, by roughly 13%.

So, the average yard has shrunk by 26% and it's still shrinking.

Of course, here in King it's quite a different story.

But as you look around at some prestige subdivisions, you may very well find similarities. A 10,000-square-foot home on a two-acre lot still has quite an impressive footprint.

If you have the means, then by all means, go for it.

Most of us homeowners fully appreciate the blood, sweat, tears and money that go into our homes.

Square footage is misleading in that it does not include an unfinished basement, the wasted garage space and the two stories of wide open foyer airspace.

My parents had a three-bedroom walkout bungalow on four acres in Caledon. Our kitchen and living room area was spacious, but the rest of the house was modest. We spent most of our time outside in pleasant weather and I always felt there was room to spare.

The property offered many places to explore, pause and reflect, and hide from my parents!

Cars were bigger back then, when steel was plentiful and gas prices were reasonable. In the case of automobiles, bigger was a bit better, and sometimes safer. Cars began to shrink when oil prices rose and conserving energy became a necessity.

We ate healthy, home-cooked meals and ate out only during holidays and special occasions. Our portions remained relative most of my life and we never heard of 'super size' anything. But I do remember the 'Big Gulp,' a 32-ounce drink, when it was introduced more than 40 years ago. It actually made the news!

Fashion was limited in the late 1970s and early 1980s. I remember wearing my jean jacket almost exclusively during my high

school years. Back then it never seemed like there was a major division between classes ? we were all middle class.

?We need to learn to want what we have, not to have what we want, in order to get stable and steady happiness.

?One interesting thing about greed is that although the underlying motive is to seek satisfaction, the irony is that even after obtaining the object of your desire you are still not satisfied. The true antidote of greed is contentment.? ??Dalai Lama

Since becoming a parent, the trick for me has been trying to keep my kids grounded. Sure, every parent spoils his/her children. The key is to instill some values and appreciation, and impress upon them the value of things and the hard work parents endure to provide for their families. Unfortunately, our society often works against us.

Consumer goods are no longer durable, and we're living in a disposable society. Who even repairs TVs, stereos and refrigerators anymore? Trends are fleeting, so what's hot today is cold tomorrow. New technology arrives monthly and our vices continue to be fed. TVs are bigger than ever and our refrigerators do everything but cook our meals.

I think our kids have their heads on straight, but I worry when marijuana becomes legal in a few months, and edible products follow. Parents, educators and law enforcement types will all have to work overtime to mitigate the potential fallout from this political move.

It's funny how we can all make do with less.

On a recent trip to Honey Harbour, we stayed in a two-bed rustic room, sharing a bathroom and min-fridge. Small spaces have a tendency to bring people closer together!

Unfettered by our devices and surrounded by nature, everything seemed clear and simple. Enjoying one another's company, good food and sunshine was all that mattered.

We capped off our limited vacation time with a stay in a luxurious summer home on Cook's Bay. Yes, the surroundings were quite impressive and you have to appreciate a beautiful, water-front home.

We felt pampered, but it was the view, the expansive waters, the wind blowing through the trees, that made it oh, so memorable.

I think we all felt blessed that we were able to share in this time together. Talk about big ? Ontario is one huge piece of beautiful real estate.

It is truly ours to discover and enjoy. I'd be happy with a tree house in the wilderness of Muskoka or a quaint abode in Tobermory. The measure of one's wealth is not only owning a piece of paradise, but sharing it with others.