

Our everyday problems are quite trivial

By MARK PAVILONS

Be grateful for what you have and stop complaining. It bores everybody else, does you no good, and doesn't solve any problems.
Zig Ziglar



Our country is a great place to live.

Canada's economy is growing slowly and steadily and ranks among the top dozen in the world with regards to GDP.

In other words, we're living the dream, in a fairly wealthy country.

It may not feel like that for some of us most days as we put in our hours at our day jobs, then continue working at home with our spouses and children long into the night.

A visit to my family physician revealed something interesting. He firmly believes that our 'first world' problems are largely made up, or exist in our own heads, largely because we're bored and have it way too good.

He said to determine if we have real challenges, compare our problems with those of developing nations. In 'third world' countries do they worry about the size of government, sex education in our schools, carbon taxes, gun control, and marijuana laws? Is it important, for instance, to the people of Haiti, that government facilities have charging stations for electric cars? Do residents of mountain villages in Guatemala care about NAFTA? Are the rural Kenyans on blood pressure pills and antidepressants?

Corruption, poverty, war, hunger, health care, education, physical safety. These are top worries in many countries.

What then, are our problems these days?

Well, as an average Joe, I watch the prices at the pump on a regular basis. While I know that one cent per litre will only translate to a couple of bucks on a fill, I like to think I'm getting a deal. One extra litre will get me only 12 added kilometres. Doesn't seem like a lot, does it?

I scan the grocery ads and flyers each week because feeding a family is not only important but costly. If I can save \$30 a week by shopping at No Frills, that's what I do.

I worry about my daughter at Western, who's renting a place with other students in London. We keep track of her on social media and the odd text.

None of these are life-and-death dilemmas. The same can't be said of our fellow humans around the globe.

Some 821 million people now hungry and over 150 million children are stunted, according to The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2018 study. Limited progress is also being made in addressing the multiple forms of malnutrition, ranging from child stunting to adult obesity, putting the health of hundreds of millions of people at risk.

What do you mean, there's no Wi-Fi? Have you uttered this phrase recently?

We no longer rely on maps or hand-written directions. We simply punch in an address, or speak to our smart phones, and voila, we're given detailed, up-to-the-minute directions to our destination. What did we ever do without this?

These are everyday realities for many of us, and yes, some are shared by our counterparts all over the world. Millions of others do

have cell phones and take selfies. When we were in rural Dominican Republic, I noticed an unusually high number of people with cell phones. Apparently, in some countries the phones and services are very cheap, making it affordable for almost everyone. When my daughter Lexie volunteered in Kenya, their hut was a 6-hour truck ride from the airport, over paths that can hardly be called roads.

We also complain daily about the traffic and congestion. Imagine that, we're sitting in our \$40,000, air-conditioned vehicle, listening to our favourite music, idling in traffic for maybe 15 minutes. It's a tough life!

We also get irate when idling too long at traffic lights or waiting for a train to pass. Recently, I timed some of these irritants and while it seems like an eternity, we're talking two minutes, tops. Will a two-minute delay really ruin our day?

We also get our knickers in not over parking.

A recent study commissioned by King Township revealed there's more than plenty of parking in all of our urban centres. We have so much in fact, that it won't be an issue for another decade or so.

We have become a bit lazy in this regard. We want, and need, to find a parking spot right in front of our destination. Councillor Bill Cober wanted to know whatever happened to the concept of 'walking a block' to one's location?

I find it so petty when people tear a strip off restaurant wait staff for forgetting their fresh-ground pepper, or the fact their hotel room didn't come with the latest potpourri. Really, folks? Some of these rants make me sick to my stomach.

One of the major 'first world' complaints is being left on hold when calling a company for service. Typically, you'll find this when calling government offices, Internet providers, banks, etc. It's estimated the average person spends 43 days of our life on hold. Just something to consider when you're in a hospital bed, taking your last breaths.

Our species has honed our need to complain into an art. We whine about our common, everyday woes, from our sports teams and politicians to the weather and latest movie releases.

There are reasons, not excuses, for this behaviour. Today, we have more free time than ever before. Our jobs and technological advances have made our lives pretty simple, and struggle-free. Our ancestors, on the other hand, toiled night and day to make a living, put food on the table.

We have more free time, and more freedom of expression than ever before in our history.

We should be using this to further the human condition in really vital matters like poverty, homelessness and clean drinking water for all.

Instead, we cowtow to the smart phone gods and worship political correctness. The abyss of 'first world problems'?

Give me a treehouse in remote Belize any day!