

We must be our children's role models



Mark Pavilons]

There's no easy fix to humankind's current predicament.

But we have the resources to make things right and chart a course for a bright future.

With the passing of two major government budgets last week, civil servants and politicians tried to do just that. They're largely well intentioned and fully understand our challenges. They work with what they have.

And so do we all.

I've been a bit harsh on our younger generation in recent writings, noting they have a lot to learn. But some recent events have caused me to tilt my head a bit, to get a better view.

The apple doesn't fall far from the tree, my dad was fond of saying. Of course, that can be both a good and a bad thing. It's good when our kids do great things, but bad when they mess up and fingers are pointed.

Hey, it's not easy being a parent. We do what we can. Biology and nature combine to create a human being. Add some nurturing, funny faces, diaper changes and 24/7 duties for the rest of our lives, and these offspring are ready to tackle the world.

Given current realities, I really feel for our young group of future movers and shakers. Careers are somewhat limited today, as those choice jobs are becoming scarce. In my day, the world really was our oyster, but today that clam is closed shut in many regards.

If you young bright minds can manage to overcome the financial burdens of post-secondary education, and they do graduate, I truly hope they grab that brass ring.

Of course, the massive civil service is always one of those decent career pathways. So whether you're an engineer, social worker or even journalist, you can find meaningful work with various government bodies and agencies.

Parents have to be cognizant of where their tax dollars go. While the system is what it is, we can see where we're getting the biggest bang for our buck.

Not enough attention is paid to our regional school boards in the province. They command massive budgets and oversee hundreds of facilities that care for and educate our children. Many see this as the most important aspect of our society, especially since many countries do not have anything close to universal education.

We put our children in the care of others for roughly seven hours a day more time than we spend with them. For a modest portion of our tax dollars, we receive this care, education, social interaction, extracurricular activities and more.

While parents are active with school councils and school activities, how many take an interest in school board decisions, budget talks or extracurriculars? How many even visited a website or spoke to a trustee candidate in the last municipal election?

Our priorities are definitely askew. That is no one's fault but our own.

My faith in our young got a boost recently, thanks to my eldest daughter Lexie.

My first-born, together with her drama classmates, have advanced to the provincial finals of the Sears Drama Festival, with a student-written piece. I watched them at the regionals and was simply amazed at the story line, quality of acting and precision at which they pulled off this performance. It was compelling. Definitely not your typical high school play that most of us love to forget.

I was so proud and inspired by these kids, and my own daughter, who unfortunately meets a tragic end in the play. Hot on the heels of this was my daughter's election as Student Trustee for the North, for the Dufferin-Peel Catholic School Board. She was elected by her peers in a mini-election that featured some 20 candidates. She will be attending board meetings, discussing issues with student council representatives, attending conferences, etc. This is how many politicians are born. While she had a great speech writer, her delivery, enthusiasm and charisma are things I had little to do with. She won the hearts of her peers and she is led by passion in everything she does. I was almost silly with excitement the afternoon of her victory. She accomplished what I couldn't. I ran in the municipal election of 2010 in Bolton, seeking the post of regional councillor. There was very little consolation in finishing second. These events have filled my parental heart with joy. And they also fill me with optimism, hope and confidence that maybe, just maybe, our planet is in good hands. But we can't just sit idly by and let the youngins muddle through. We have to be their role models, their shining examples, their leaders and moral guardians. We can instill in them many really good qualities, ideas, concepts and a grasp of making this planet a better place. There is nothing wrong with lofty goals. My daughter has somehow connected with her passionate side and her soul beams with goodness and a strong desire to help others. Noble, indeed. She's gotten a taste of mission work in less developed nations and hopes to one day join the UN or work with some NGO. She's off to a good start. In my era, and still today, parents tend to lead their offspring into practical career choices and decent jobs. In high school, if any of my peers would have blurted out that they wanted to save the world, they would have been on the receiving end of laughter and insults. I have no idea what kids today are aiming for and whether they ponder the state of the world, or concentrate on filling their pockets. What does matter is our undying support, praise and commitment. If that comes with bragging rights, all the better!