

We're all to blame for the current state of affairs

Mark Pavilons



What's wrong with the world today?

How often have you heard that question??How often have you asked it?

I'll admit, I ask myself that on an almost daily basis. In my job, I?come across a lot of information, over the Internet and via the multitude of emails I received day in and day out. I'm surprised I haven't lost much hair, given the fact I'm scratching my head like a flea-bitten mutt.

It's easy to sit in judgement of a broken system. It's easy to call the shots from the comfort of our living rooms. It's no so easy to accept responsibility and blame for the state of current affairs. But we have to.

Our system in Ontario has evolved over decades. As our province grew exponentially, so did its infrastructure, population and bureaucracy. Perhaps the changes were not startling, but occurred bit by bit over the years. After all, most of us were too busy with our lives to worry about external forces that grew and entrenched themselves like some invasive weed.

And here we are. House prices surpassing the \$1 million mark; the highest electricity rates ever; expensive gas prices, and bureaucracies so bloated that \$1 billion annual budgets are now commonplace.

I have become a little nostalgic lately, as I'm faced with such ?insurmountable facts.? Most 50 and 60-somethings remember simpler times.

In my youth, we had no stress and lived carefree lives. Choices were more limited. You either did well and school and went to college or university, or you left Grade 12 and entered the trades. Career choices seemed a bit more focused as well. You could go to university and with degree in hand, you were pretty much guaranteed a decent job, whether or not it was related to your field of study.

While a couple of my peers did actually become doctors and scientists, most went on to sales; became teachers or journalists, while others started their own businesses. A few travelled and some joined the armed forces.

In my day, I?came across some great, dedicated teachers. They were not only good at their craft, they cared. They became our friends, confidants and counsellors.

Those who've been in the education system for more than 20 years will tell you a lot has changed since then. Dramatic changes to the system arrived when Bill?Davis extended full funding through OAC in 1984. It has remained controversial in some ways ever since.

But what transpired was a universal education system, perhaps a little watered down, that is now geared to churning out graduates. Our system is more of a social service. Students are numbers and the system, and its EQAO testing, seems more concerned about numbers than excellence; quantity not quality.

The result??More and more students heading off to university and college, with no clear idea of what they want to do. Perhaps they don't have the skills to earn their degree. All are overburdened with the high cost of post-secondary education. There may come a time, in the not-too-distant future, where we will have an elitist system, and post-secondary study will be limited to the wealthy. The

rest of society will be herded off to some massive, global assembly line, along the lines of Orwell's Big Brother dystopia. But wait. This all didn't just happen. We let it happen. We voted for politicians with certain agendas. We permitted, perhaps even encouraged, widespread funding. We invited government intervention into all aspects of our lives, especially education. We permitted the civil service to gorge on the public trough, to the point where it's no longer affordable, or controllable. For those who took an active stance and interest in the issues and made their voices known, good for you. For those whose apathy and inaction paved the way to our current state of 'dystopia,' shame on you!

So, here we are in 2016. Our intelligence has not kept pace with our technology or responsibility. We claim to be environmentally conscious, yet we're in the worst shape ever. We believe we have achieved total equality and tolerance, enjoying our racial and religious rights and freedoms.

We are lulled into a false sense of security.

We take our individual freedoms to the max, often to the detriment of our own community.

When discussing speeding issues in King, Councillor Bill Cober noted that residents have to take responsibility in their own communities, since they are the main offenders. The government, he said, shouldn't have to put a soother in everyone's mouth! Right you are, Bill.

By passing the buck to the powers that be, we are becoming less of a democracy and more of a socialistic, even communistic society. How far off are we from a top-heavy, top-down dictatorship in this country?

Maybe a return to simpler times, with a simpler message is in order: 'Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.'