



# Opinion

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### Verbatim

"The violent occupation has cost Ottawa families the feeling of security in their own homes. They are scared. Using financial tools like recouping costs is one way we can pressure the occupation organizers to leave."

Ontario Liberal leader Steven Del Duca says costs should be recouped from the occupiers who have cost Ottawa taxpayers \$800,000 a day on policing alone since the occupation began.

### The Monitor

The Freedom Convoy is dividing Canadians (32% support, 62% oppose); 65% of Canadians think the Freedom Convoy represents a small minority of selfish Canadians. Canadians are divided on whether the premier and prime ministers share the blame for the protest in Ottawa (44% agree, 45% disagree).

Leger poll

OBSERVER EDITORIAL

## Development charges and an addiction to growth

**In a purely speculative guess on how Breslau will develop, Woolwich is prepared to siphon \$30 million from the pockets of new homebuyers over the next decade or so, that's on top of the many more millions already slated for removal.**

Development charges already add tens of thousands of dollars to the cost of a new home, giving lie to any discussion about "affordable housing" coming from the same politicians and bureaucrats mouthing such platitudes today.

Beyond the rationale of "growth paying for growth" that's used to justify the ever-increasing fees on new houses, development charges are symptomatic of the growth mantra.

Despite talking about protecting the environment, combating climate change and protecting farmland, local municipalities act in just the opposite way by encouraging growth.

Those who support growth will always argue the benefits outweigh the negatives. Growth is always good. The trouble is, they can't ever prove it. What we do know is that, at the local level, each new home ends up costing more than it generates in revenue. In the short-term, however, the opposite is true. The money paid just to develop the land and construct a home – development charges and building permits, for instance – bring in tens of thousands of dollars in each case. Then there are the property taxes. The funds far outweigh the marginal cost of providing services to one more home.

Multiplied over hundreds of houses in a subdivision, that money adds up to a big boost to municipal coffers. Problem is, little if any of that money benefits existing residents of the community. Rather, the year-over-year growth in assessment is simply rolled into the budget – typically doled out by politicians and bureaucrats not to the public but to themselves in the form of raises and more hires.

No one ever says, "Hey, we have all this extra revenue, let's cut everybody's taxes." That, at least, would provide some short-term compensation to existing residents inconvenienced by growth.

Over longer periods, growth brings increased demand for services – always overpriced in the case of governments – and, eventually, huge infrastructure costs.

The entire system of government and the economy are both predicated on growth. None of our politicians at any level is talking about reversing that trend, even though constant growth is by definition impossible. Life on a finite planet makes that clear.

The environmental impact of human activity is the clearest indicator of where growth is a problem. We use up non-renewable resources and we spew pollutants into the air, water and soil. That can't go on forever.

Nor can we continue to pave over land, especially productive farmland, in perpetuity. That, of course, is one of the arguments made in favour of transit in the war on suburban sprawl; as with many policies, the reality is always different from the spoken platitudes.

Bringing the issue back to Woolwich and the Breslau connector road – a \$30-million project, half of which is the cost of spanning the railway tracks – everyone buying a new home anywhere in the township will be paying for it. The rationale is dubious – there's growth, so it should be built – but approving it is as simple as tacking on another fee to an already expensive purchase.

The impact of development charges on the affordability of housing is rarely discussed. More and more Canadians are getting used to the idea that they may never own a home, limited to becoming permanent renters whether or not that's their preference. The rising cost of buying a home is ultimately reflected in higher rental rates, however, as the issues are linked. Not by any stretch of the imagination could it be said that buying a house in this area is affordable, particularly for first-timers. The crunch gets even larger the closer one gets to the GTA.

Each new fee only makes the situation worse.



ANALYSIS OF CURRENT WORLD EVENTS

## The rise and decline of sociopathy

I generally leave the psycho-history to Hari Seldon, but just this once I feel sufficiently motivated to venture into the field. The immediate spur for this departure is the spectacle – half-fascination, half-disgust – of Boris Johnson, Britain's part-time prime minister, gradually foundering in a sea of his own lies. But there are other examples, too.

There was Donald Trump just a year and a bit ago, trying to drag an entire country down with him and having some success in the enterprise.

There's Jair Bolsonaro, flailing around as he awaits almost inevitable defeat by 'Lula' in next October's Brazilian election.

There's Viktor Orban, astounded to face a united six-party opposition in Hungary's April elections.

And what they have in common is that they are all liars. Not shy, sly liars. Bold, in-your-face, shameless liars. They don't care if you really know the truth from personal experience. It doesn't bother them that you know they are lying. They will just say the lie again – and you might even believe them, because they say it with such conviction.

They are convincing because after a split-second when they privately decide that some lie



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Global Outlook on World Affairs

will serve their purpose, they actually believe it themselves. They have other markers, too: they are usually male, they are always intelligent, they are almost always charming, and they generally get through several spouses and many children in a lifetime. They are, in a word, sociopaths.

Almost all confidence trickster are sociopaths, but the reverse is not true. Sociopaths can also end in the highest positions in business, in the professions, even in politics. (Not so much in the military, where they tend to get found out early.) And in recent times, they have been showing up in the highest political offices in many countries. Why now?

Which takes me back to an interview I did with a sociologist in an American university many years ago. He had written an article about how evolution had shaped human marriage customs, which somehow fitted into some radio doc I was doing at that time. God knows.

Anyway, we had finished up, and as I packed my gear I casually asked if he knew of any evolutionary circumstances that were changing human

behaviour now. He paused for a moment, then said that he thought the sociopaths were multiplying. So I unpacked my gear and resumed the interview.

He began with the obvious statement that sociopathy is usually if not always a genetic property. Most sociopaths are born, not made. And he speculated on how they could have escaped being weeded out by natural selection back in the hunter-gatherer days, because those were small groups of people – 30 or 40 adults – where everybody knew everybody else.

His answer was that small groups are not very vulnerable to a sociopath. Everybody has his number before he reaches reproductive age, so he can't be a super-spawner. Everybody checks his lies with everybody else, so he doesn't get away with much. And there are certain rare circumstances where it could be handy to have a sociopath around.

Hunter-gatherer bands are normally not just egalitarian but literally leaderless. However, little groups that can suddenly face existential crises – a famine, a rival band – need somebody in reserve who can provide ruthless, charismatic leadership. He'll be almost an

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