

Annual General Meeting

CCPA's Erika Shaker Outlines the Fallacy of Austerity Budgetting



On June 5, Erika Shaker of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives told us of the dire impacts of austerity budgetting

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Editorial Chatter

This issue begins with a letter to the editor covering two topics, both of which are replied to by OTIP and Charles Hawkes. It was refreshing to receive such a letter taking issue with some of our content. Our readers are perceptive and able to make a point effectively as does THW Fielding.

President Manfred Netzel summarizes the Annual General Meeting, a good portion of which was a presentation by Erika Shaker from the Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives. Her data demonstrated clearly the folly of austerity budgets.

Book reviewer David Schreiber presents us with two reviews of books that could not have been written a decade ago -- *Big Data, The Revolution That Will Transform How We Live, Work and Think* and *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*.

Paul Rook, recently rejoining the ARM C12 executive, is at his curmudgeonly best, taking on transit, woolly mammoths and 3D printers.

The Retired Bard in this issue recreates a Hallowe'en of many years ago. Follow Jim Whitehead's childhood journey in a tough town.

Manfred Netzel's Presidential Perspective considers ambition, politics and ethics.

Finally, Educators Financial Group demonstrates the wisdom of financial literacy and the important role a financial advisor plays in maximizing your investment opportunities.

Our next issue will come out by year's end. Look for David Schreiber's review of *Soldaten*. It is a genuinely chilling book that reveals what soldiers in war say among themselves.

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After School Volume 15, Issue 3, September 2013

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Opinions expressed in *After School* are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the policies of ARM Chapter 12 or of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation.

Submissions are always welcome but will not be returned. All submissions are subject to editing for length and style while respecting the author's intentions.

Editorial Team: Larry French, Julia Harney, Manfred Netzel, Paul Rook, Stephen Fuller, John Jansen, Neil Walker

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Calendar

Wednesday, September 18, 2013. Great News For ARM C12 Golfers at SWING FOR KIDS Annual Fall Golf Tournament.

The Club Link and Rolling Hills management team have arranged an extra special price of only \$70 for playing the Rolling Hills Challenge Course on the East side of Warden Ave. across from the main club house. The regular cost to play this course is almost \$80, so please act quickly as places may be limited. The price includes 18 holes of golf, a power cart for two (compulsory), and a BBQ lunch that includes your choice of meats, salads, vegetable plate, assorted cookies, dessert squares, coffee or tea, prizes and all taxes and gratuities.

Registration: 9:30 a.m.
Shotgun Tee Off 10:00 a.m.

Send your cheques for \$70 by September 4 to Jim Loftus, 7 Roanoke Rd. Apt.301, Toronto, M3A 1E3 loftaire@gmail.com. Make

cheques payable to ARM C12 Fall Golf Tournament c/o Jim Loftus. Include team members' names, phone numbers and email as available. Note: Cancellations must be called in to Jim Loftus no later than 9:00 p.m. Mon. Sept 16/13

Wednesday September 25, 2013

Serial Killers: Everything You Need To Know But Were Afraid To Ask

Serial killers obviously fascinate us. There have been endless books, movies and now TV series, such as Dexter and The Following, dealing with serial killers. But why do they fascinate us? This and other questions will be explored by Paul Rook as he presents another topic from his popular Criminal Minds and Investigations course. Paul will answer the following: What factors make a person become a serial killer? How do they differ from

Directions to golf course

Rolling Hills Golf Club,
12808 Warden Avenue,
Gormley, Ontario L4A
7X5.

Golf Shop:
905 888-1955

From Toronto take Hwy 404 north to Stouffville Road. Turn right (east) on Stouffville Road and drive to Warden Avenue. Turn left and go north 2 kms on Warden Avenue. Entrance is on the left side (west) of Warden Avenue.

other criminals? Why are they so difficult to catch? What is profiling and how is it used to catch these unique criminals? Specific examples, such as Ted Bundy and Willie Pickton will be discussed. This is a follow-up to Paul's fascinating discussion of the history of forensics at our April lunch. Location: Erie Room, 60 Mobile Drive (OSSTF Provincial Office) Time: Registration begins at 9:45 am. Lunch cost: \$17

Friday, September 27, 2013. "Live Thoroughbred Racing" at Woodbine Race Track.

12:30 pm: Meet in front of the building. 12:50 pm: Starting time for the "live" racing. Contact: Millie Oliver cell – 416-580-9992 or home – 905-839-0117. Please call to confirm attendance by September 20, 2013.

Wednesday, October 2, 2013, Grand River Cruise.

This three-hour cruise features video presentations on the history of the river, a luncheon on board the cruise ship, and the lively entertainment of the Blazing Fiddles. The fee is \$89 all-inclusive. Board the bus at the Agincourt Library, (Kennedy and Bonis) or at the North East corner of York Mills and Yonge, or near the Islington Subway Station at Islington Avenue and Aberfoyle Crescent. Please confirm your attendance with Rosemarie Mohring by September 1, 416 425 6677. For information after September 1, call Elsa Dunn, 416 485-4515

Wed. October 30, 2013

Old is Gold – Antiques Show & Luncheon

A repeat of the popular antiques roadshow. Antony's Grill (big sign). Corner of Lawrence & Don Mills (in Don Mills Plaza). Lots of free parking. The popular ARM antiques show is back again at a lovely new location. As usual, three professional appraisers will be on hand to talk about antiques and to look at your "treasures". You may learn something about them and also get estimates of their value. There is no charge for the appraisals. However, please bring no more than two items. Registration: 10 am. Cost: \$19.00 buffet, all inclusive (except for alcoholic drinks) RSVP to Jim Loftus at 416-447-0811.

Wednesday, December 4, 2013. Holiday Luncheon
Latvian Centre. Contact Jim Loftus 416 447-0811.

Letters

To the Editor:

ARM Chapter 12 should be very wary of relying on the apparently safe provisos of so-called *deluxe* travel health insurance or any other supplementary plans. The insurance company underwriting the plan has a clause that denies claims where—in its opinion—there is a *pre-existing condition* determined by the underwriter. Recently an acquaintance of mine was denied a claim from a similar plan by a company using this type of clause in spite of medical submissions to the contrary. Some \$30,000 is at stake, plus legal costs. In truth, even if the situation involves an unfortunate accident, the insurance company will draw on its considerable legal powers to try to deny any claim if there is even a suspicion of being *at fault* or aggravation of a pre-existing condition, which can include minor arthritis and occasional hypertension, among others. ARM Chapter 12 members had better be 100 percent fit—with no prior health problems at any age whatsoever—to successfully launch a claim. How many of us are in that condition? Try to find a private insurer that will grant an affordable *no exceptions* travel health policy to anyone over 65. Insurance companies are in business to make a profit and couldn't care less about travelling senior citizens health problems.

On another completely different topic, the article by C. Hawkes may also mislead since it bases its premises on individual, not household, income. While it is true that many lower income families live in the outer

areas of any city (as they always have) they also have considerably variable household income, since many members of one household work. Conversely, where there is a high individual income recorded, in many cases that reflects one income earner. The other household members may not need to work or—more likely—the household consists of only one high income earner. This may explain the clustering around subways where the building types and quality encourage this.

Although there can be no doubt about some of the alleged financial contrasts between areas of the city, Hulchanski and his ilk may be guilty of trying to politicize the patterns for an ulterior socialist-driven motive.

Also on this topic, when did Toronto develop terms relating to the obsolete and reviled *class system*? I would think that the use of such terms is an anathema to many Canadians.

The abuse of population data/statistics is both widespread and widely recognized. I worked in several supervisory positions after educational retirement for government census and statistical departments in the U.K. and Canada and can personally attest to the dangers of imputing anything to statistics and their databases.

Sincerely

T.H.W. Fielding

Lytham-St. Annes, Lancashire, U.K.

OTIP responds to T. Fielding's letter on travel insurance

Pre-existing condition clauses in insurance contracts can be very complex and sometimes hard to understand. When we speak with our members we help them understand the meaning of the technical wording to make it clearer, but it is still a challenge. This is what I can tell you about your ARM Deluxe Travel Benefits.

Your plan provides coverage for medical emergencies that require immediate medical attention while you are travelling outside your province of residence due, or related to, the following:

- A sudden, unexpected injury which occurs or a new medical condition which begins while you are travelling outside your province of residence; or
- A previously identified medical condition that was *stable*, but not diagnosed as terminal or prescribed for palliative care, at the time of departure from your province of residence.
- The word *stable* often causes confusion and is defined further in the contract. *Stable* means that you:
 - Have not in the last 90 days before the departure date:
 - Been under treatment or evaluation for new symptoms or conditions uncovered in a medical examination; or
 - Experienced a worsening or increased frequency of existing symptoms or examination findings related to the medical condition, disease or

illness—diagnosed or undiagnosed—if you have been seen by a medical professional in relation to the symptoms; or

- Been prescribed or recommended a change in treatment or medication related to the medical condition by a physician or other professional, not including regular changes in medication that are made as part of an ongoing treatment or a reduction in medication due to an improvement in the medical condition; or
- Been admitted to, or treated at, a hospital for the medical condition; or
- Did not have future non-routine tests, investigation or new treatment planned for a previously identified medical condition or future medical appointment planned with respect to an undiagnosed medical condition.

These details apply to everyone covered under your plan.

Some of our members run into difficulty when their

doctor states that their patient is *OK to travel*. While the doctor may consider their patient's condition to be stable, physicians may not be aware of contractual provisions that may impact their patient's eligibility for travel coverage.

Claims can only be assessed, subject to policy provisions, once they are made. The insurance carrier and their travel provider will take all factors into consideration and will review all medical information in consultation with the attending physician.

Every person is unique, and so is every person's medical history, so our representatives can't comment on whether a member will be covered for a possible claim before the member leaves the province.

If you ever have questions or feedback about your ARM extended health care plan, please contact us at 1-866-783-6847. We're happy to help.

Sincerely,
Chris Floyd

President of Individual Insurance Services, OTIP

Charles Hawkes responds to T. Fielding's letter on *Three Cities*

I welcome the reply by T. Fielding to my article *Three Cities* and the questions he raises about the premises and methodology employed in analyzing the increase in income disparity among Toronto neighbourhoods.

In brief, the article reports the findings of Dr. David Hulchanski of the University of Toronto who headed a research team investigating the decline of middle class Toronto over the last 35 years. His report concludes that the city as a whole had divided into three smaller cities based on income and geography. City 1, downtown, was wealthier, and slowly growing; city 2, with middle class incomes, was now scattered in various locations, and had declined sharply; city 3, the poorest, was growing to such an extent that it could comprise 60 percent of Toronto neighbourhoods by 2025.

T. Fielding's question of Hulchanski's use of individual income figures rather than household income to measure income disparity is a fair question. The report considers three measurements: employment income; individual income (employment, investment, and social assistance accruing to an individual); and household income (total income accruing to a

household by its members).

The report finds little difference among any of the three measurements. Each one shows that since 1970 Toronto has become divided into a three city pattern reflecting increasing income disparities among its residents. The online appendix to the full report gives more detail on this issue.

Contrary to T. Fielding's comments alluding to a *socialist-driven* motive behind the research, nowhere in the report does Hulchanski refer to any political ideology. In fact, when I attended his presentation on the report there was no mention of capitalism, socialism, or any other *ism*. His suggestions for reversing the income disparity trend and improving Toronto's urban life could be advanced—and are—by politicians of any political persuasion: better transit, inclusive zoning laws, upgrading rental apartments, and a move towards a form of proportional representation to give citizens more control over urban issues.

Sincerely,
Charles Hawkes

Annual General Meeting

Austerity is no solution

CCPA Report, farewell to Ken Coran, new executive members

BY MANFRED NETZEL

The agenda of this year's 14th AGM addressed items of concern to all ARM Chapter 12 members: a very extensive collective bargaining and political action report from outgoing OSSTF President *Ken Coran*; reports on pensions, health benefits, trips and recreational activities; and an enlightening keynote presentation by Erika Shaker, National Education Project Director for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) in Ottawa.

Shaker described her own positive educational experiences

Austerity's Impact on Ontario were widely distributed at the meeting. There was a formal tribute paid to our now former OSSTF president for his many years of commitment and leadership during some of the most difficult political times faced by OSSTF members, the Federation and by public education in Ontario. And, of course, the fine catered buffet dinner organized by executive members Jim Loftus, Karma Naik and Jim Mile was quite tasty and enjoyed by some on the backyard patio of OSSTF provincial office. Musical



ARM Chapter 12 president, Manfred Netzel, thanks Erika Shaker for her enlightening presentation

in Hamilton and also presented some very interesting and provocative views regarding the global economy and the trend by all levels of governments in Canada to use misguided austerity measures. Shaker also made some thoughtful predictions about the direction that public education should take in the years ahead in Canada. Copies of the 2013 Joint CAW/CCPA Report *More Harm Than Good:*

entertainment was provided by father-son duet Jim and Myles Finlayson, organized by Vice-President Jim Loftus.

Without repeating the entire agenda, it is necessary to report the recent political face-saving attempts by the Wynne Liberals to allow for “moderate” changes to Bill 115, but still not removing the worst aspects of the legislation for teachers and other educational workers. Of course, the subsequent



Rosemarie Mohring highlights the ARM Grand River luncheon cruise



David Pickering, District 12 OSSTF Treasurer, brought greetings to the Annual General Meeting on behalf of the D 12 executive

announcement by Ken Coran that he had decided to be the *Liberal* candidate in the London-West re-election on August 1 surprised most of us in OSSTF and our union allies. We certainly had no formal indication of his intentions when we paid tribute to him during our AGM and afterwards.

As retired educators, we should feel a moral duty to continue our role in the struggle. This year's Annual Labour Day Parade in downtown Toronto has the theme Together Fairness Works. If you and your family, friends and neighbours can give some time on that day to show your solidarity, please plan to attend the parade. Details can be found at armchapter12.org, which is constantly improving the profile and relevance of Chapter 12, and is ably administered by webmaster *Steve O'Brien*.

Finally, the AGM was also the place for Executive elections. I was honoured to be re-elected as president and

am also pleased by the re-election of most current executive members for the coming year 2013-14. In addition, we were joined with the election of three new executive colleagues. Michelle Barraclough brings a wealth of financial experience at both the District 12 and provincial OSSTF levels to our leadership group. Elsa Dunn has been a regular participant in Chapter 12 luncheons and trips, so she will bring her commitment and organizational skills to our team. Paul Rook, has ably chaired our AGMs for many years and also had a previous role in our Chapter as Vice-President during Ian Cameron's presidency. Now, he has also decided to bring his many skills and talents to the Executive. Welcome aboard, Michelle, Elsa and Paul. As always, I can be reached at (416) 767-8786 or by e-mail: mnetzel@sympatico.ca. The AGM was held on June 5th at provincial OSSTF's head office in Don Mills.

Labour Day Parade, September 2, 2013

Together Fairness Works

Show solidarity with our District 12 colleagues, as well as with our friends and allies in the Toronto social justice movement

Meeting Location: Southwest side of University Ave. south from Queen St. W. to Richmond St.- Look for our flags (we will be in the parade's section 2 this year)

OSSTF swag will be distributed at the start of the parade between 8:50 am and 9:15 am. Wristbands are

Required to Gain Free Entrance to CNE; they will be handed out only at the meeting site 8:50 am - 9:15 am

Please join the District for a Luncheon at Gossip Restaurant & Lounge on the CNE grounds (50 Prince Edward Island Crescent, Exhibition Grounds) Wristband needed for CNE entrance.



Curmudgeon's Corner

Of 3D printers, woolly mammoths and subways

Print plastic guns, bring back the woolly mammoth and build the Scarborough subway

BY PAUL ROOK

I AM BOTH FASCINATED AND FRUSTRATED by the inability of humans to see the potential negative consequences of their actions, decisions and inventions.

The invention of the 3D printer provides us with a perfect example. It may have lots of positive applications. I am sure the inventors thought of these. But why didn't they realize that if we can make 3D plastic objects using this printer we can make a plastic gun that shoots real bullets. In fact, it's already been done. Thus, anyone with access to one of these machines can make a functioning gun. Moreover, access will become easier as the price of 3D printers goes down. In fact, Staples plans to soon sell a personal 3D printer for \$1,300. These guns are more dangerous because they are difficult to detect at security checkpoints. Also there will be no record of their manufacture or sale. Gun control just became more difficult. Of course, members of the NRA in the United States will be happy with this development because it will enhance Americans' right to own guns.

Scientists are now close to the point where they will be able to recreate the DNA of long extinct animals. Didn't these people see Jurassic Park? Don't they realize the potentially disastrous consequences of introducing long-lost species into our modern world?

I also find it absurd that we are trying to bring back extinct species at a time when we are rapidly killing off thousands of current animal species. It reaches the level of the bizarre when the woolly mammoth, which has tusks, might be brought back, yet we are killing off two species—the elephant and the rhinoceros—for their tusks and horns. Based on this trend the mammoth has a good chance of becoming the first species to become extinct twice.

The decision to build a subway to replace the Scarborough rapid transit line is another example of bizarre decision making. The subway will travel seven kilometres with only three stops. Subway supporters tout the stop at Scarborough General Hospital as a

great addition. However, those familiar with the area are not sure where a major subway station with bus bays and parking can be accommodated at that corner. The alternative, which is an above-ground rapid transit line, would extend 10 km with seven stops and pass through areas of Scarborough with far more transit riders. There would be more potential riders because it would stop at Centennial College and some of Scarborough's priority neighbourhoods where people depend on public transit. The subway option will also take longer to build. And did I mention that a subway will cost up to \$1 billion more than a rapid transit line.

The subway decision is a perfect example of how emotion, self-interest and misinformation can overwhelm logic and facts. Many of those who support the subway are driven by the feeling that Scarborough has been disadvantaged since amalgamation. So getting "our Scarborough subway" became an issue of pride. Some subway supporters put incredible pressure on all Scarborough councillors to support the subway even if it will not be the right choice for their constituents and in most cases would not even pass through their constituency. Of course, anyone candidate for mayor would not want to antagonize these well organized and very vocal subway supporters. Votes always trump good decision making.

Finally, there was a lot of misinformation about what light rapid transit is. For example, Mayor Ford seems to confuse it with streetcars. This accounts for many erroneous claims, including the one that light rapid transit will cause more traffic congestion. As a resident of Scarborough, I find this last claim most puzzling because the rapid transit line that is to be replaced, and which would have been a significant part of the new transit line, was designed so that it does not in any way slow down or interact with traffic. Maybe the Toronto councillors should have taken a ride on the current Scarborough rapid transit line before making this decision.

Considered

Big Data: A Revolution That Will Transform How We Live, Work, and Think

Viktor Mayer-Schonberger and Kenneth Cukier.
Eamon Dolan/Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

REVIEWED BY DAVID SCHREIBER

If we were previously unaware of the role big data plays in contemporary life, the revelation in June that the NSA vacuums up a billion domestic telephone records a day will have wakened us from our slumber. Developments new and deeply unsettling are under way in the bowels of governments and corporations. And yet, as becomes very clear in *Big Data: A Revolution That Will Transform How We Live, Work, and Think*, the weakening of personal privacy is only one of the areas undergoing profound change as a result of the explosion of data.

It is difficult to grasp the amount of data being produced around us. Whatever statistics one chooses to quote (e.g. 90 percent of all existing data has been created in the last two years and doubles every two years) the extent of data is overwhelming. However, big data is about more than its volume. When the avalanche of data stored in databases is sifted by smart computer algorithms, the effect is transformational. In terms of the attack on privacy the threat goes far beyond simple surveillance. With the mere tracking of individuals by means of their cell phone data, credit card use, Internet activity, or CCTV cameras that can recognize faces and gaits, information about a person can be extracted from many sources—often quite far-flung—and the combination is vastly more intrusive, more revealing, and more troubling. What emerges about us is not only a picture of our lives—more complete than our friends know—but also a platform which can build frighteningly accurate predictions. In fact, correlations between information about individuals and the probability of their behaving in certain ways are so compelling that we need to worry about becoming a society like the one in the movie *Minority Report* where people are arrested based on predictions, before they commit a crime.

Suspicions about a future society where privacy has disappeared are commonplace, but *Big Data* anchors those suspicions in fact and delineates their connections to other developments. While the authors devote a good



deal of space to outlining the more neutral changes and the great benefits that big data will bring—particularly in health care—they carefully point out the dark side. A full chapter addresses recommendations for ameliorating the harmful effects of big data. Yet, ironically, that chapter is cold comfort. The authors, after showing how extremely difficult it is to control what can be done with personal data, conclude that the most effective approach is to leave regulation in the hands of the corporate and government owners of the data, overseen in rather vague ways by general principles and “data auditors.” May better ideas be found soon.

The most enlightening parts of the book, however, are not about personal privacy, since so much has been written on that subject elsewhere. Other chapters cover three fundamental transformations in our ways of thinking that are under way, which the authors describe as N=all, messiness, and the decline of causality. By N=all they mean our increasing ability to access more information on a topic until we begin to approach all the possible data.

This overturns many of our current approaches to finding truth, particularly in the social sciences. In the past we have carefully selected samples from an overall population, generated a likely hypothesis or two, then subjected our samples to analysis in order to produce statistical facts about the whole. That was the process in what the authors call “the era of small data.” For when enormous datasets replace those small samples, the process changes. For a start, the traditional small data tools—hypotheses dreamed up by humans, surveys, questionnaires, analysis supervised by humans—become obsolete. And computers, rather than putting a small number of hypotheses to the test, can search through vast quantities of data and generate essentially all possible hypotheses. When Google data scientists attempted to track the spread of flu by analyzing the search terms of its users (three billion per day), they did not investigate only plausible search terms, such as “medicine for cough and fever.” Their computers looked for correlations between search queries and the historical data on the spread of the flu and identified 450 million mathematical models or hypotheses. Testing each of those finally revealed a combination of 45 search terms that produce results as good as, but faster than, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention with its traditional reporting methods. Human-centred analyses cannot compete with that kind of thoroughness and the speed of those results.

Another benefit of N=all datasets is that they provide accurate information about small subgroups in a way that the old sampling methods cannot. By messiness the book refers to errors in the data. As our data expands toward N=all a certain amount of messiness in the data becomes acceptable, since it represents such a small proportion of the whole that it has no statistical significance.

Perhaps the most radical change will be the devaluing of causality. What computers find are correlations, not causality. They might search through data and find, for example, that people who consumed ginseng, aspirin and fried earwigs experienced a remission of their cancer. The discovery of that cancer-curing diet would be of paramount importance and the precise cause-and-effect mechanism would be of secondary interest. Psychologists have told us for some time that our need to view life in causal terms, while apparently hardwired in our minds, often makes us see connections that are not there and fall prey to illusions. Perhaps, after all, causality doesn't matter quite as much as we thought. As we discover truths more and more by correlation, a de-emphasis on the search for causality might be the most profound effect of big data.

In 1995 Nicholas Negroponte's *Being Digital* taught us how to think less in terms of atoms and more in terms of bits. *Big Data* may serve as a similar guidebook to yet another fundamental change in our world.

Considered

The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains

By Nicholas Carr. 2011. WW Norton

REVIEWED BY DAVID SCHREIBER

The Shallows sets forth an apocalyptic but simple idea: the Internet is changing the way we read and consume information, conditioning us to read in fragments, impatiently, distractedly, skimming rather than reading, always looking for a hyperlink, a graphic, a video, anything to relieve us of the pain of extended text. The Net is ending the age of Gutenberg and, most importantly, stripping us of the values that have been at the core of our civilization for over five hundred years: the ability to concentrate, to read deeply, to reason carefully, to follow extended lines of argument, even to think deeply and contemplatively.

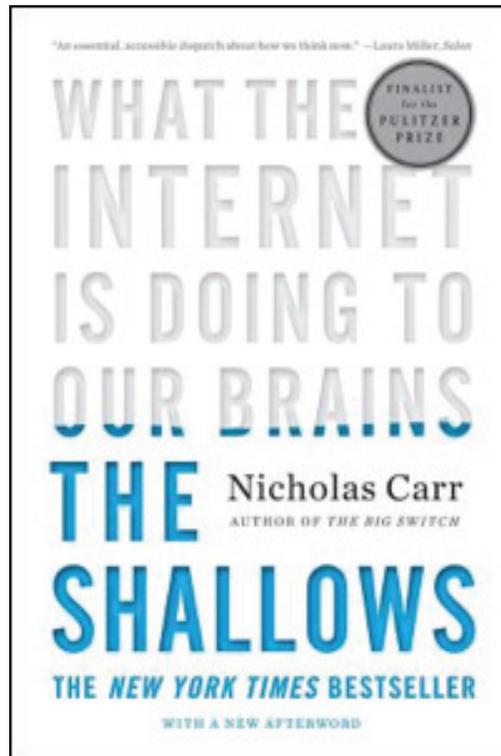
Written in an easy, journalistic style, the book includes

a good deal of interesting material. Of special interest is a history of the technology of writing and its effect on people, from Sumerian cuneiform on clay tablets, to Egyptian papyrus, scrolls, Greek and Roman parchment, wax tablets, and finally the bound codex or book. Even at the time of the early codices, however, civilization remained an oral culture, the truly literate culture appearing only after the conventions of writing began to appeal to the eye rather than the voice. When words became separated from each other by spaces, when punctuation marks came into use and a standardized syntax replaced the rhythms of oratory, decoding the script was no longer the reader's primary

occupation, and a more thoughtful form of reading began to take hold. Reading became a silent, private, individual activity. With decoding made easier, longer, more carefully organized texts were made possible, and the literate frame of mind took hold. Civilization finally overcame the natural human tendency to constantly shift attention. The norm became prolonged, attentive, disciplined reading, and as people read more deeply, they reflected on what they read, became critical, drew inferences, formed associations, absorbed the book into their own thinking. The book accustomed people to linear, sequential thoughts bound together by logic. In the last stage of the process, with the invention of Gutenberg's printing press, the literate culture spread rapidly and widely. It became the dominant culture of Western civilization.

Another great strength of *The Shallows* lies in its careful description of the myriad ways in which the Internet does the opposite of what the old culture did. The scattering of our attention is not just the result of reading from a screen being more tiring than from a page, causing us to spend less time with the text, or of the way hyperlinks are forever tempting us to move away from the current page to another page. And it's more than the way our attention is so easily disrupted and lured away by animations, video clips and sounds. All those distractions, even if we can manage to concentrate on our reading, are in our field of view as we look at a page and inevitably seize part of our attention. A web page bristles with options that our minds cannot ignore. Studies show, too, that even the increased physicality of reading from a screen compared with a book diverts part of our attention away from the text as we move and click a mouse or point and touch with a finger. And, of course, there are the off-page interruptions, such as alerts from our email account, Twitter, Facebook or RSS feeds. The reason no one likes to read an entire book on a Web page is not just because the light from the screen tires the eyes. The Internet is, by its very nature, an "ecosystem of interruption technologies."

Although *The Shallows* is readable, it does not state its arguments with great clarity and succinctness. Too much repetition and digression muddy the waters, and the author



reaches too far to find evidence and explanations. Regrettably, he spends a lot of time trying to prove that our mental habits have real, physical effects on our brains, apparently to suggest that the Net's influence on the individual has a kind of permanence. However, he stops short, quite rightly, of claiming that the Net alters our genes, leaving it obvious that an intellectual diet that is not purely Net-based can avoid the pernicious effects of the Net, and even reverse them.

But what of the central thesis of the book? Has Carr demonstrated that the Net is becoming the new paradigm, stamping all our perceptions and modes of thought with its own image?

The Net may be everywhere,

yet many of us do not feel, as Carr does, that we are losing our ability to read deeply, ponder over what we read, and think sequentially. The Net's ubiquity has not prevented mathematicians from continuing to churn out watertight, logical proofs, and scientists do not appear, as a whole, to have been reduced to scatterbrains. There are still scholars, and books are still being published and read. Carr believes that the book will transform into the e-book and be cluttered with an array of distracting Net-like search features, hyperlinks, social media options, etc., but that hardly seems certain. And, for all his liking of studies and surveys, Carr provides little data on the large-scale, brain-altering, attention-shattering effects he believes are sweeping across society, other than his personal testimony and the example of an occasional like-minded professor or Rhodes scholar who confesses to no longer reading books. Yet the future may very well prove Carr right, and that possibility is deeply disturbing.

Whatever reservations one may have about some of *The Shallows*, it does serve as an important warning for us as individuals and as a society not to embrace the brave, new digital future thoughtlessly and to keep a critical eye out for its side effects. The field of education is under great pressure to "stay contemporary" by using the Net more and more in classrooms. As a counterweight, *The Shallows* should be required reading for all educational decision-makers, from teachers to cabinet ministers.

Summer elections are heated

Ethics and leadership mix with political ambition

BY MANFRED NETZEL, PRESIDENT, ARM CHAPTER 12

I hope you have been enjoying a wonderful summer despite some extreme temperatures and examples of dramatic weather, such as happened in the GTA on July 8th. I was a victim of the *big rain* that early evening when my High Park-Swansea neighbourhood experienced a 46-hour power outage. Others in the west end had flooded basements and damaged homes or vehicles because of the many downed trees and power lines. To add insult to injury, our municipal leadership (you know who I mean in particular) was almost non-existent during this natural disaster, except for a short press conference in the confines of his air-conditioned City Hall workplace where he stressed the need for energy conservation since the Toronto hydro system was “only hanging on by a thin thread.” Compare this to the inspiring proaction of Calgary’s mayor, Toronto-born Naheed Nemshi, who oversaw the relief efforts of his flood-ravished city. How might the apostle of Ford Nation have responded to such a catastrophe in Toronto—perhaps a special radio program on CFRB or simply a retreat to the family cottage?

This contrast in political leadership is the theme for my newsletter column, which raises some serious concerns about a trend towards declining personal ethics and morality exhibited by many in political leadership positions. It seems that a closer scrutiny of several recent examples in our country, province and even (perish the thought) within our Federation is warranted. The antics in the Canadian Senate over the past few months are the most egregious example of personal greed and deceit. Four appointed individuals took advantage of lax spending and accounting procedures to submit claims and tax write-offs that cheated Canadian taxpayers of several hundred thousands of dollars. Ironically, three of the disgraced Senators were appointed by the prime minister, who in Opposition questioned the further role and public accountability of the then Liberal-dominated Upper Chamber. Sadly, two of the senators come from the ranks of the media and the other two have ethnic minority backgrounds, which was meant to promote greater diversity in Parliament. It will be interesting how Stephen Harper deals with the ongoing backlash from

this scandal over the summer and into the new legislative session in the fall.

Provincially, the unexpected resignations of five Liberal MPPs—including the former premier—necessitated by-elections called by Premier Kathleen Wynne for August 1st. Although I (and some political observers as well) think scheduling any election during the height of summer to be somewhat unethical in itself, the bigger concern is some of the newly-nominated candidates. Specifically, I want to briefly focus on the NDP candidate in Scarborough-Guildwood, the Conservative candidate in Etobicoke-Lakeshore, and the Liberal candidate in London-West.

Firstly, the NDP saw fit to nominate Scarborough-Guildwood candidate Adam Giambrone, best remembered as former west end city councillor and TTC chair under then mayor David Miller. Besides having no direct ties with the Scarborough community he hopes to represent, he totally endorsed the Miller-inspired transit plan which included no subway lines for Scarborough despite the apparent growing public support there now for new subways. Even the process for nominating the NDP candidate for this by-election was surrounded by some taint because of Giambrone’s naked political ambition. Thus, after first recruiting a South Asian female candidate at the request of the party, he then strongly encouraged her to remove herself from the nomination race or be challenged. In the end, he won the nomination by only two votes over the initial local choice, so she is now considering legally challenging the entire process and even seeking an urgent court order to invalidate the nomination meeting results and hold a new meeting before the actual voting day. Remember, his previous aspirations to succeed Miller as mayor in 2010 also ended after 10 days of campaigning due to a serious personal moral indiscretion related to an incident that apparently occurred in his City Hall office.

The next example is the Conservative nomination of current Toronto Deputy-Mayor Doug Holyday as their candidate in Etobicoke-Lakeshore. While his personal roots and political credibility in Etobicoke as the last local mayor before amalgamation are apparent, his public

record on 14 key public interest issues, as tracked by a volunteer citizens' group Vote Toronto and listed on their website www.votetoronto.ca, make him *public enemy one* as judged by *Now Magazine*. According to his critics, the self-styled penny pincher has voted for money losers like the Union Station leasing deal, elimination of the vehicle registration tax and the island airport expansion, as well as supporting unlimited police overtime pay. Conversely, he has voted against holding a public inquiry into the costly MFP computer leasing scandal under Mel Lastman, sustaining childcare subsidies and keeping school pools open (likely since the old Etobicoke board didn't have any). Most famously, he "negotiated" the deal with CUPE 416 to contract out garbage collection west of Yonge Street during the last garbage strike, but that would match the pedigree of a Hudak Tory.

My final example is the most painful for me, personally, as it involves the surprise nomination of Ken Coran as a Liberal candidate in the London-West by-election.

Having known and supported our former OSSTF president for many years, even organized a tribute at

last month's Chapter 12 AGM, it caught many of us off guard to see him accept the nomination as Kathleen Wynne's candidate. The leadership he showed in fighting the drafting and imposition of Bill 115 was truly exemplary, yet his readiness to sit in the same caucus (and possibly cabinet) with the premier and others who supported that odious piece of legislation for its duration is somewhat incomprehensible for many of us. If it is of any consolation, the opinion polls in that riding currently show Coran in third place, well behind the popular local NDP candidate and even the Conservative due to the split in the Liberal supporters and the lack of support from London teachers and leaders.

Let's hope that all of the examples I have used in this article are vindicated by a return to ethics and morality in public life. Continue to enjoy the summer and my wish is to see some of you in our ranks for the Labour Day parade. Details for the event are printed elsewhere in this newsletter and on the *calendar* link at www.armchapter12.org.

Outings

Stratford, tradition and intrigue

Fiddler and Mary Stuart offer superb entertainment

BY KARMA NAIKE

The Stratford Trip was a huge success—great fun, lunch, and superb theatre presentations of *Fiddler On The Roof* and *Mary Stuart*.

Fiddler speaks universally. Lead Scott Wentworth and the dynamic cast draw us into the community and family of a village as their traditions are challenged from within and without—their struggles are met by the dynamism of youth and wisdom of reflection. The fusion of story, music and dance involve us in a pageant of life.

Similarly, in *Mary Stuart*, Lucy Peacock as Mary and Seanna McKenna as Elizabeth carry the drama of an era—tense with religious, political and gender intrigue. The cast engages the audience in this drama so we understand how the beheading of a monarch has had impact across the centuries, such that the play was written by German author Fredrick Schiller more than 200 years after the event. Thoughtful and refreshed



on the return trip, we had more fun with raffles, prizes and treats from friends of ARM Chapter 12. Thanks to all.

A Child's Hallowe'en in Collingwood

BY JIM WHITEHEAD

And Collingwood was a tough town
and boxes came from the women's missionary circle in St
Catherines or from someplace else
and they were full of clothes that the ladies didn't want any more
and they were for us missionary kids to wear to school which we
never did
and my mother was a missionary but she wasn't in Lagos or
Miango
or Addis Ababa like the other kids' parents. She was in
Collingwood
which was a tough town of shipbuilders and of kids who were
tough
because their fathers were sailors and not home much and those
kids could fight

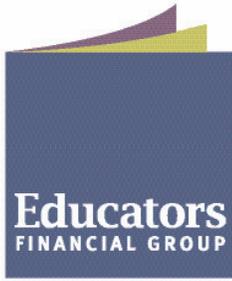
and there was a gang of kids on Cedar Street which was called the
cedar
street gang who were tough kids and they liked to get one of us
missionary
kids alone and beat him up like Angus Kirk got beat up I saw him
in the
basement when he came in and his face was dripping blood and
he was calm
and he stayed in the basement so as not to tell you didn't tell on
anybody
not even the cedar street gang who weren't much of a gang really
just kids
who would beat you up and Gus said calmly "the cedar street
gang got me"
and Collingwood was a tough town because it had the
Collingwood
shipbuilders hockey team that was the best team in the world
except for
the six teams in the NHL and we had Eddy Bush the meanest
toughest
man who ever wore skates and he broke an umpires jaw by hitting
him
even though the umpire was wearing a mask I didn't see that but
everybody
said it really happened and he spoke to me two times and
he was real nice and maybe he wasn't really mean but everybody
knew he was tough
and Collingwood was a tough town and my mother was pretty
tough too
and she looked at the clothes that had been dumped out of the
boxes onto the
living room floor the living room was kept extra clean for visitors
which

meant we didn't go in it much and the visitors were mainly ladies
from
mission circles like the ladies who had sent the pile of clothes that
we were looking at
and sometimes the visitors were crying and they weren't from a
mission
circle they were real missionaries and they were on their way to
Africa
or once in a while to Bolivia and they had to leave their kids at the
Gowans Home in Collingwood for four years because that was
God's
will and that would make them cry and usually the kids didn't cry
one kid came into the living room once to say goodbye and his
face
was red and his nose was bleeding a bit and he said goodbye
goodbye it's
my turn with the boxing gloves and he ran back to the basement
and I don't know what his parents felt about that maybe he cried
later
into his pillow... one boy cried at night when he learned that his
mother
had died in Africa just like his father had done
and Collingwood was a tough friendly town which I loved and my
mother
looked at the clothes on the floor and my mother muttered
something
under her breath that she knew I could hear but shouldn't because
I was just
a kid and because "little pitchers have big ears" which I didn't
know what
it meant but I knew it meant a kid is hearing something that a kid
isn't
supposed to hear and what my mother said was " why do mission
circles have to be so useless...I wish they'd just save the postage
or just send
us the sandwiches they serve at their meetings" ...and she said
some other
stuff too that I couldn't quite make out but I don't think it was
"praise God from whom all blessings flow"

and my mother who I called auntie Rae half the time like the
other kids
said to the big boys who were there "put this stuff back in the
box and
take it to the storeroom which is what we called the attic"... and
so that box
got put with the other boxes from other ladies missionary circles
where it was forgotten until the next fall

Collingwood was a tough town and it wasn't so tough in the fall...
the kids
Were all back from whatever aunts and uncles they had visited in
the United
States which wasn't as good as Canada because American kids
couldn't
skate very good but they were ok at baseball and basketball and
football
which we we played every day after school which wasn't so bad
because
summer vacation was starting to get boring and anything was
better than
working at Smart's Farm where we could get jobs weeding onions
for
twenty cents an hour slavery being too expensive and there being
no union
and there was hikes in the blue mountain which wasn't really a
mountain
because it wasn't two thousand feet high which was how high a
mountain
was and it had wild apples and bone cold springs and cliffs and
caves
and you could see the lake and the lighthouse where my
grandfather
had tipped over the boat or the cow that he was trying to take to
the island
tipped the boat over and my grandfather had to swim back to
Collingwood
holding onto the cow's tail...and we could hike there whenever
we weren't
playing a sport and we had to be back for supper and we were
hungry and almost too tired to eat
and there was running all the way across town to the exhibition
park where
we marched to the great northern exhibition but we ran across
town to see
the high school football team play against Barrie and Orillia or
Midland
and Midland was our enemy and we beat them all but especially
Midland
because they had a shipyard too and they played us in every sport
and
we beat them because they were Catholics
and my big brother was the quarterback and the best player and
he could
have played for the balmy beach team which was almost
professional
except that he was small and they didn't know how good he was
and
they sent him home without giving him a chance
and Collingwood was a wonderful tough town and far too tough
for Midland

which we beat in hockey baseball and football and I got two hits
and two
touchdowns and only got to play one period in hockey which I
wasn't
allowed to play because they played on Sunday which Jesus really
frowned
on...you could get in trouble for even listening to a sport on the
radio on Sunday
and the boxes of mission circle clothes stayed in the attic until
Halloween
and we had Halloween even though some of the kids parents
thought
it wasn't such a good idea to have a party in honour of the evil
spirits
that they had gone to the mission field to cast out and for that
reason maybe we shouldn't even have halloween
and my dad said what what would the poor neighbors think if
forty kids
from one house descended on them demanding treats and
threatening
tricks...so it was decided we could have Halloween but we
couldn't go
door to door...we could put on costumes and we would have a
big
party with games and candy which meant the older girls would
make
fudge and if the devil showed up we would let him bob for apples
and hold his head under water
and forty kids were all at once looking for costumes and my
mother
finally had a use for the missionary circle boxes of clothes...we
just dove
in...a couple of the older girls just put on the best clothes they
could
find and went as returned missionaries...their own mothers badly
out of style...you should of seen them...I was getting anxious
what could
I wear? a few of the boys were dressing up as girls and talking all
sweet worse than any girl I ever knew most of the
clothes were for women...mission circles being what they were...
suddenly I saw it a beautiful grey silk blouse...I had to have it...
and then a miracle...a pair of silk pajama bottoms...what had
those
ladies been thinking. I grabbed the garment and a
silk scarf and I made a sword out of scrap wood and an eyepatch
out of burnt cork like my brother put under his eyes for football
and I had a silk blouse and silk harem pants tucked into rubber
boots
Collingwood is tough town and I was its toughest eight year old
pirate dressed all in silk
Collingwood was a tough town and I was happy not to go door to
door not dressed all in silk and especially not down Cedar street



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Financial literacy

It isn't just for students

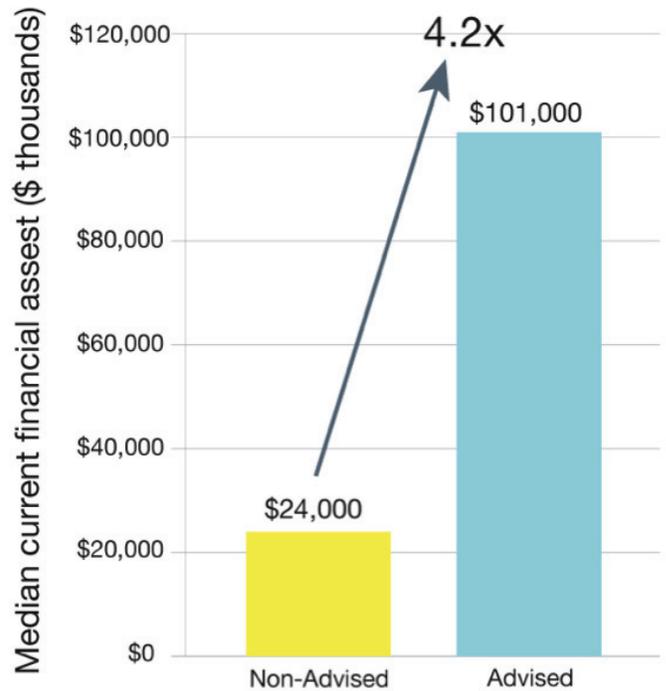
Over the past few years, there has much emphasis in the classroom on the importance of financial literacy. But financial literacy is just as important for educators as it is for students.

Financial advisors—called “financial specialists” at Educators Financial Group because of our focus on the education community—are a valuable source of information. In fact, *New Evidence on the Value of Financial Advice*, recently published by the Center for Interuniversity Research and Analysis on Organizations, concludes that the advice provided by financial advisors has a positive impact on both financial assets and retirement readiness.

In the next column is a chart that compares the financial assets of households that received advice over an extended period of time versus those that didn't:

Advice has a positive and significant impact on wealth accumulation.

There are numerous books and tons of information available online about managing personal finances. And while the financial needs of many Ontarians may be similar, challenges such as managing summer cash flow and pension payments make educators' financial situations unique. There aren't many resources that specifically address the needs of Ontario educators, but there is easy access to [The Learning Centre](#), which provides helpful information about managing personal finances. And, there is access to the expertise of our



Educators financial specialists.

Simply call us at 416.752.6843 or visit us online at educatorsfinancialgroup.ca.

Join Arm 12's New Theatre Club

Act Now - Final Opportunity To Sign Up

We are creating a theatre club for ARM 12. The plays selected would usually be at the smaller theatres in Toronto, such as Tarragon, Factory, Canstage, Soulpepper, and the Mirvish smaller productions. The club members would be offered two plays from September to the end of December and two plays from January until June. We would not be taking out a subscription to a series of plays at one theatre. This is separate from our Stratford excursions. This would operate differently from other ARM 12 events:

- Those interested must sign up to be members of the club (see below).
- The plays being offered for that half year or year would be sent to the club members by e-mail or if they have no e-mail by letter.
- The members would only sign for the plays they wanted to attend. You are not committed to attend all plays in a given year.
- We would not be advertising each play in After School – only the existence of the ARM 12 Theatre Club
- The plays would be selected by a small committee of ARM members, who are members of the club.

How tickets will be purchased and paid for would have to be worked out after we find out how many people are interested. The members would eat at a local restaurant prior to attending the theatre.

If you are interested in joining please do the following.

Contact Paul Rook by e-mail prook@sympatico.ca (the preferred method) or phone 416-292-9919 and provide the following information: your name(s), e-mail address, phone number, and home address