

SUSTAINABLE GOVERNMENT

The size of the Canadian government has reached an unsustainable level. Taxes and tariffs are consuming our limited resources at an ever-increasing rate, despite some recent, moderate cuts. The halls of the nation's capital are overpopulated with politicians and bureaucrats with seemingly insatiable appetites. An endless profusion of laws is choking the body politic. In this age of environmental consciousness, I propose that the Canadian government jump on the green bandwagon by adopting the three 'R's: reduce, reuse, and recycle.

Reduce. Our elected representatives and their unelected bureaucratic helpers do not seem to understand that there are limits to growth when it comes to government. If they strip-mine the bank accounts of taxpayers of all their gold and silver, there will be none left for our children. If they clear-cut the landscape of people's lives and pave it over with a parking lot of laws, they will destroy the various habitats of free people, eliminating diversity as nonconformists become an endangered species and finally go extinct. When it comes to taxes and laws, our government officials need to learn to live simply, that the rest of us may simply live.

Reuse. Instead of piling new law upon new law, developing every last corner of our formerly private lives in a never-ending quest for the latest legal gadget, our lawmakers should acquaint themselves with existing laws that were perfectly sufficient for prior generations. They might just find that some of the old laws are better built, that they embody a craftsmanship and a commitment to quality over quantity that have been forgotten in this age of churned-out factory-made laws. For instance, "Thou shalt not steal" has been a law for quite some time, if I'm not mistaken, and it's a great law. It is to the point, it embodies a profound principle, and for those with feeble memories, it can be written on the palm of the hand for easy reference. A few more old gems like this one will far outshine the costume jewelry favoured by modern-day legislators. Government officials, like all children, want the latest new bauble, but this kind of me-too, keeping up with the Joneses is clearly just another aspect of the wasteful consumerism that is rampant in government today.

Recycle. Of course, not all old laws are good. This month's *Reason* magazine mentions an old American law that mandated the stockpiling of helium, for all of those helium filled warships the Americans once thought they might need. For some reason, slow, bulky helium warships never took off, but the Helium Reserve Program was only nixed in 1996, after over seventy years of refining and storing helium! In the unlikely event that a new law really is necessary, it should be written on the recycled paper of this kind of old law – better yet, since recycling is an inefficient process, and since new laws tend to be ever-longer, it might just require the paper of two or three old laws to fashion one new law. If we are to preserve any of our natural freedom, it is absolutely necessary that we clean up our act, and one place to start is with our legal landfills, those mountains of old laws that lie rotting and forgotten, seeping poison into the groundwater of our private lives at the whim of some power-lusting bureaucrat. These piles of trash are smelly, toxic eyesores, and while I don't want to be an alarmist, I think the level of legal trash is rising. It is literally eating away at the coastline, and we on the peripheries will soon be drowning in a rising sea of taxes and regulations.

In summary, I urge all of you who love liberty – whether you call yourselves libertarians, separatists, liberals, conservatives, or even new democrats – to demand environmentally responsible governance by calling upon your representatives to reduce, reuse, and recycle. We must let politicians know that if they are committed to cleaning up the waste of high taxes, bloated government payrolls, and onerous laws, they can also clean up at the polls. We must raise our voices and be heard. After all, we have not simply inherited liberty from our ancestors – we are also borrowing it from our children.

by Bradley Doucet