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LOTTERY INDUSTRY DUPES CANADIANS

We Canadians have obviously increased our dosage of crazy-pills. What other explanation is there for the T.D. Waterhouse poll that found “32 per cent said they expected a lottery win to support them post-retirement – versus 34 per cent who said they had retirement savings plans with actual dollars in them.” (Maclean’s, Mar 14 2011)

What is it that drives us to dwell in this land of the delusional? Perhaps the long frigid winters have numbed more than our fingertips -- cranial frost-bite is more difficult to diagnose. Or maybe it’s our notoriously sedentary lifestyles that have allowed fat cells to barricade brain function – “Ain’t nothin’ getting’ by me baby”.

Shameless lottery advertisements pour proverbial gasoline on the embers of delusionary thinking. “The 1982 roll-out of Lotto 6/49 with its ‘Just imagine” slogan made the lottery a national pipe dream.” Nothing was beyond our reach; with a little help from our good buddy, the Lottery System, of course. We could be “set for life”; no more fears, lavish gifts heaped upon loved ones. Yes, we’d live the dream to the max.

The sleek advertising machine motivates Canadians to reach for more than dreams -- we scramble for our wallets, coughing up “...\$8 billion dollars in annual revenues to the five regional lottery associations.”

I believe it’s time for a good long drink of pure reality. “The odds of winning Lotto Max can run as high as one in 85 million, so close to zero as to be indistinguishable.” Gail Vaz-Oxlad, host of the TV show *Till Debt Do Us Part* states, “You’re more likely to get struck twice by lightning driving to the store to buy the lottery ticket than you are to win the lottery.” What sane individual responds to such odds by exclaiming, “Great, count me in.”

Before flushing more cash down the lottery toilet, consider the following alternatives.

Step one: Determine the average annual amount you spend on lotteries. Be courageous and honest. Such calculations are best accomplished while seated as the results have been known to initiate shock and heart palpitations. Though Canadians squander an average of \$150 on such endeavours, we must take into account that many spend zero. Thus, if you gamble, your personal total is probably significantly higher.

Step two: Imagine what can be accomplished with this amount -- then go for it. Practice generosity by purchasing ice-cream for everyone in the shop. Become a philanthropist by investing in favourite charities. Open a savings account and marvel as it grows.

Step three: Remind yourself frequently that get-rich-quick-schemes are just that -- schemes. They are not designed for your welfare, but for the padding of another's bank account.

If you arrive at the corner store slightly sizzled due to having been inexplicably struck by lightning not once, but twice on the way there -- then go ahead and snap up a ticket. It's your "lucky" day.

The rest of us are proved winners by our willingness to leave our hard-earned cash where it belongs -- in our wallet.