

A mindless, embarrassing response

Isn't it amazing how smart people can sometimes be so stupid? One assumes that the people who run the University of Toronto, one of Canada's preeminent universities, are relatively bright.

But then again, how do we explain the idiotic decision by the university brass to close the 88-year-old Hart House Rifle and Revolver Club?

The decision, which a university spokesman described as a "values" question, apparently is supposed to have something to do with a recent spurt of gun-related shootings in Toronto's guns and gangs culture.

That makes about as much sense - actually, even less - than the calls by Ontario Attorney-General Michael Bryant and Toronto Mayor David Miller for an outright cross-Canada ban on all handguns, as if a ban would have any impact whatsoever on the criminals who are using their illegally-obtained guns to shoot each other.

In the uproar over this university decision - which some hope to appeal even though the autocratic academic leaders say is not appealable - Rob Steiner, an assistant vice-president of the university, was quoted as saying that "It was generally felt that the presence of a gun range on campus 80 years ago might have been consistent with our academic values ... in the last 10 years those values started to deviate.

"This is really a values issue. This is not a safety issue as strictly defined. If there had been a safety concern it would have been shut down right away."

He went on to say, "Shooting a gun on campus. Sit with that for a second. It leaves me cold...."

Truth to tell, it wouldn't interest me either, but there's nothing wrong with it. And nobody is asking Steiner, or anybody else, to join the club.

And what, pray tell, does Steiner really mean with his code about "values?" Whose "values" are we talking about here?

The "values" of the 450 current club members - not to mention the thousands of other students over the years - who have used this range to pursue a perfectly legal hobby and, unlike any other university activity we can think of, boast a perfect record: not a single accident or incident in all those years.

Obviously, Steiner is also not speaking of the "values" of those Canadians who cheered when club member Avianna Chao - currently competing for a spot on Canada's 2008 Olympic team - won a gold medal at the recent Pan American Games in shooting.

Long before gun safety became an issue at all, the university club instituted a host of safety mechanisms which have allowed it to boost its perfect safety record. The guns are kept under lock and key - with locked doors accessible to only a highly trained few. What's more, cameras are linked directly to campus police and photo i.d. is a must for entry to the club which most students didn't even know existed until this controversy broke.

So what's the problem?

Again, university officials are lowering themselves to offer sleazy comparisons between the existence of responsible, law-abiding target shooters in a safe environment on campus, and the murder and mayhem in certain parts of Toronto. There were even references to the recent gun incidents at Dawson College in Montreal and Virginia Tech, a cheap comparison if there ever was one.

The fact is, it's all about the self-perception of some haughty academics who obviously don't like guns and who are swept up in the notion of political correctness, no doubt relishing their superior wisdom when it comes to what students should and should not be allowed to pursue.

Maybe they should talk to Cindy Luk, a software engineer and member of the Canadian National Rifle Team. She has competed in four world cups and one world championship and is hoping to compete in the 2012 Olympics.

"I'm very disappointed because this is my primary training facility," she said. "Where do I go now?"

More to the point, why should she have to go anywhere else to pursue her legal - and socially responsible - hobby?

It's a sad commentary on people who, rather than use their power to censor, should be offering the student body as many options as possible within the confines of reasonable social and/or academic behavior.

Former U of T psychology professor Judith Ross, 68, who shot at the clubs for many years and still competes internationally, said it best in another newspaper:

"It's a mindless response and the university should be embarrassed."

Amen to that.



National Affairs

Claire Hoy

When will our ship come in?

As a regular lottery player, I'd like to think my hard-earned cash is going to a good cause.

The fancy ad campaigns presented to the masses show people doing their "happy dances" after winning the jackpot. The messages are further sweetened with mention of millions upon millions being directed towards hospitals and various charities.

It's all a very rosy picture to be sure.

The Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation Act of 1999 dictates that gaming proceeds be directed to hospitals, charities, sport and cultural activities, etc. Non-profits benefit from their fair share through the Ontario Trillium Foundation, charged with dishing out a "guaranteed" \$100 million annually.

OLG revenues also go to the horse racing industry, First Nations and to municipalities who host OLG gaming operations.

There are the close to 30,000 jobs created at Ontario's casinos and we all know that jobs are good for everyone.

Millions are also spent on "problem gambling" and programs to help the public with their addiction.

All sounds very generous and quite altruistic. For those who haven't figured it out yet, the lotteries are a tax on those who can't do math.

While I enjoy the weekly anticipation of hitting the big one, I do understand the odds.

I'm more likely to die of flesh-eating disease (1 in 1 million) or being killed by



Mark Pavilons

lightning (1 in 56,439). The best analogy is this: you're blindfolded holding a pin and there's one ant running around somewhere on a football field. Your chance of piercing that ant is roughly the same as winning the Lotto 6/49 jackpot.

I wonder how many unlucky stiffies were hurt or killed driving to buy their weekly lottery tickets.

But like an obedient serf, I dutifully purchase my share of tickets, helping to bolster the provincial government's coffers. The more money the government receives, the more good it can do, right? Paradise is just around the corner thanks to lottery players like me!

But not all is bliss in the land of plenty.

The OLG receives an estimated \$6 billion in annual revenue. That figure should be remarkable, but many of us don't think about such trivial things.

Well, to put it in perspective, that's more than the GDP of 48 countries and

island nations around the world.

From this vast amount, some \$2 billion annually is profit. While it's a princely sum, one wonders why \$4 billion is being spent on salaries, facilities, utilities, computer stuff, pens, paper, staples and golden handshakes. Boy, many are making a very good living on the backs of honest, hard-working citizens.

I guess we should be thankful for the billions we do receive.

These figures are, of course, from 2004/05. There simply aren't any figures available for the past year and a half. They're sitting on someone's desk at Queen's Park, waiting to be digested by enthusiastic summer readers. Or not.

It would be nice to see something more comprehensive than what appears on OLG's tax-supported Web site. Something like a balance sheet or audited statement. Too much to ask? I know it would take some doing, but surely there are a few dollars around to hire a team of out-of-work accountants.

Someone suggested that all of our ills could be solved by private lotteries, kind of like the former Irish Sweepstakes. Since the City of Toronto is in such dire straits, maybe Miller and the gang could create their own 50/50 draw - a weekly lottery that pays half to the winner, and half to the city. A couple of months of that, and the city would be back on its feet again, ready to tackle new

financial challenges.

Why stop there?

Since it's proven to be a cash cow (I prefer the term Golden Fleece), why doesn't every municipality in the province set up its own game to generate much-needed revenue? We could have weekly events held at the local community centre, similar to the travelling roadshow that was Wintario many years ago. A debonair MC joined by the mayor and councillors could roll the drum and draw the winning numbers, supervised of course by local accounting firms. It could be broadcast on Rogers Cable to every Caledon household and we could turn it into some sort of reality TV show.

Like Dorothy and her three friends, we'd all be skipping merrily along the road paved with gold.

But \$6 billion annually is no laughing matter. I think we loyal players deserve to see the goods and review the ledgers and spreadsheets. The public needs to see the figures, down to the last penny, to ensure we're getting a fair deal from our provincially licensed scheme to print money.

Just as publishing the names of winners is "important to demonstrate the integrity of our lottery games," I think publishing a financial statement is equally important.

Balance sheet or not, I will uphold my duty as an Ontario resident, to support my fellow men and women, by purchasing my weekly lottery ticket!

Canada's role in global security

Canada has a long-standing history of working with the international community to tackle some of the most serious security threats, making the world a safer place for all.

The Global Partnership Program is one way our government is actively addressing global security threats through our participation in projects within Russia and former Soviet states and republics.

The Global Partnership Program is intended to address one of the most serious security threats facing our world today, by preventing terrorist groups from obtaining weapons and materials of mass destruction (WMD) to carry out their campaigns.

This need to address security threats became very clear following the events of Sept. 11, 2001, when terrorists attacked the United States. Since that time, the damage and casualties caused by terrorists by this type of attack has been limited only by the destructiveness of their weapons in their possession.

The risk of WMDs being used against innocent people significantly increased fol-

Ottawa Journal

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lowing the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe. During that time, Russia took possession of the many quantities of nuclear, radiological and chemical weapons, and related destructive and dangerous materials.

As a result, Russia now has approximately 40,000 metric tonnes of chemical weapons, tonnes of highly enriched uranium and weapon-grade plutonium, as well as decommissioned nuclear submarines with spent nuclear fuel. These stockpiles of highly dangerous materials need to be secured and destroyed, to prevent them from falling into the hands of terrorists.

Furthermore, there are thousands of former weapons scientists unemployed or underemployed in the former Soviet Union, who are often vulnerable to financial offers for their expertise and knowl-

edge from terrorists and countries involved in weapons proliferation.

The G8 countries (United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the European Union and Canada) recognized these concerns and as a result, came together to launch the G8 Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction. These countries agreed to raise up to US \$20 billion to support co-operation projects, initially in Russia. In 2002, Canada chaired the G8 and reinforced its leadership on the initiative by committing up to \$1 billion over 10 years, starting in 2003.

Four priority areas were identified which included: destruction of chemical weapons, dismantlement of nuclear submarines, nuclear

and radiological security, and employment of former weapons scientists. While the initial projects will be implemented in Russia, there are provisions to extend funding to other former communist countries.

On June 8, 2007, during the G8 Summit in Heiligendamm, leaders (including Prime Minister Stephen Harper) reaffirmed their commitment to the Global Partnership and issued a Mid-Term Review document, a report on activities and contributions of the Global Partnership countries and a Statement on Non-Proliferation. In addition to this continued commitment to the Global Partnership, Canada's government committed \$5 million (in May) to upgrade security systems at airports and other border crossings, in Ukraine, to prevent nuclear terrorism.

This is one more way Canada's government is playing a crucial role in preventing the spread of WMDs and ensuring they remain beyond the reach of terrorists and proliferators who would use them to threaten democracy and freedom around the world.