



## SOCIAL MEDIA WANTS YOUR MONEY

By Nick Kossovan

The American way (read: capitalism's primary goal), which greatly influences the Canadian way, has always been about separating you from your money. I'd wager that within moments of the Internet becoming available to the public on April 30, 1993, many asked themselves, "How can I use this new medium to hawk stuff?" In 1997, SixDegrees launched the first online social networking site, marking the birth of social media. Almost immediately, Hucksters, charlatans, snake oil merchants, and outright fraudsters tumbled out of the woodwork alongside corporate advertisers.

Have you seen the online ad for the Bluetooth-enabled Shiatsu foot massager? How about the one for the organic mushroom supplement powder? How about the micro-magnetic slimming earrings? Initially, social media thrived on feel-good content. However, social media companies have bills to pay and profits to make; thus, understandably, monetization became their focus, resulting in social media being flooded with ads for cheap, bright, and shiny items. Today, you can't scroll through your feed without being inundated with ads promoting supplements, subscription services, or self-proclaimed "experts" teaching a craft they've never mastered.

Remember the days of browsing the Internet and having to venture off to visit the seller's website? The creation of social commerce—the marriage of e-commerce with social media—eliminated the need to venture off. Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, and TikTok now have native social commerce features baked into their respective platform. This feature, when leveraged by Svengali-like marketing strategies introducing you to products you didn't know existed, not surprisingly, leads to impulse purchases.

Who knew there was an avocado slicer 3-in-1 tool for hassle-free avocado preparation for only \$3.47? According to the ad, there are less than 400 left. At that price, it's a must-have. Never mind that I can't recall the last time I ate an avocado.

As kitchen junk drawers, closets, garages, basements, and storage lockers will testify, creating fear of missing out (FOMO) by offering a cheap product and claiming inventory is dwindling is a proven marketing strategy. It's anyone's guess what percentage of our online and offline consumerism are impulse buys.

Thanks to social commerce, a "marketer" can present you with a well-priced hoodie as you scroll through TikTok. To take advantage of this deal without overly interrupting your viewing of shuffle dance videos, simply click "Buy."

I find it exhausting to scroll through my social media feeds, feeling that everyone is trying to sell me something. Social media has become cluttered with "Buy me!" and become an algorithmic traffic driver for targeted advertising. Then there's the fakery factor.

- Despite all the claims, there's no "free." Everything has a price: time (attention) and/or money.
- There's no genuine "I want to help you" advice, only pitches and sales funnels.
- The freebies are shallow. A life improvement e-book offered for "free," in exchange for your email address, is just recycled advice you've already heard or read. There's nothing revolutionary or exclusive about the advice, as was promised.

How many businesses behave on social media irritates me. Naively, I assumed social media would evolve into a people-to-people medium, like the whole world sharing one big kiss, as opposed to the business-to-consumer digital marketplace it has become. Weight loss programs, get-rich-quick schemes, influencers shilling products that don't produce results, Facebook friends selling beauty products, salons pushing Botox and fillers and ads that intentionally make asterisk text impossible to read. Companies that stretch the definition of "free," "guarantee," and "unlimited." Products designed to wear out quickly. Subscription-based models for everything. At some level, social media and the Internet thrive on veiled scams.

My angelic side believes that those behind the transformation of social media into a Turkish bazaar simply want what we all want: money to buy time and freedom. Because our economic system works like a Ponzi scheme, everyone, to some degree, tries to make money, to move around with their consumerism, by taking advantage of others. In other words, who am I to judge those who sin differently than I do?

When you consider how social media companies generate their revenue, it's hard to condemn their monetization efforts.

Your role in social media isn't that of user. You're the product offered to advertisers and those who are dreaming of making money on social media. Platforms aggregate your attention (aka views), which they then sell to advertisers. It shouldn't come as a surprise that your attention span and actions are being commodified when you're on social media.

In economics and finance, there's an adage that's especially relevant here: "There's no such thing as a free lunch." From an economic perspective, nothing is ever free. In general, if something appears to be free, like a social media account, you're paying for it in some tricky way.

Always consider where your money is going. Consider your life goals more carefully. Don't let social media dictate your dreams. Sadly, social media has replaced the American dream of working hard and making money with the dream of not working hard and making money, resulting in our social media feeds being inundated with shameless attempts to separate us from our money.

**Nick Kossovan, a well-seasoned veteran of the corporate landscape, offers advice on searching for a job. You can send him your questions at [artoffindingwork@gmail.com](mailto:artoffindingwork@gmail.com)**

## DRUGS SEIZED FOLLOWING DRUG INVESTIGATION IN OSHAWA

A male is in custody following the conclusion of a drug investigation that saw numerous drugs seized from an Oshawa residence.

On Thursday, April 25, 2024, members of the Community Response Team, with the assistance of the Tactical Support Unit, executed a search warrant at a residence in the area of Albert Street and Elena Avenue, following the conclusion of a drug investigation. A male associated to the residence was taken into custody without incident. Cash and drugs were located in the residence and seized.

**Michael EDWARDS**, age 53 from Oshawa is charged with: Possess Schedule I Substance for the Purpose of Trafficking (MDMA), and Possess Schedule I Substance for the Purpose of Trafficking (opioid).



## CANADA FLAG PROUD

By Dale Jodoin

In our town and across our country, there used to be one flag that everyone knew and respected. It was our flag, the one that stood for our whole nation. It reminded us of freedom—the freedom to speak, to think, and to follow any religion. When we heard stories about our brave soldiers fighting to protect these freedoms, we would look up at our flag and feel proud.

But things have changed. Now, it seems like every month there's a new flag or a new cause that we're supposed to learn about and remember. Our old flag, the one that used to fly high above everything else, doesn't get the same attention anymore. It feels like it's just given one day to shine, while other flags and causes get a whole month or more.

Our flag used to be everywhere—above schools, city halls, and public squares. But now, other flags stand tall in those places, and our flag looks lonely and forgotten. Fewer people seem to care about it. Some even protest against it or burn it, which makes those of us who remember its importance really sad.

These days, everyone talks about freedom using different flags. But it seems like our old flag, the one that actually represents the freedom of our whole country, gets lost in the mix. It's like it's no longer just about our country; it's about everything else.

I wish our flag could be the one that everyone looks at again with pride. I hope it doesn't just end up forgotten in a drawer somewhere. It would be great if we could all remember what it stood for—bringing us together as one nation. I hope we can find a way to make our flag mean something special to everyone again, just like it used to.

## \$77,500 RESILIENT COMMUNITIES FUND GRANT HELPED CAMP SCUGOG

### MOVE FORWARD



NESTLETON, ON – On Saturday, Camp Scugog held an in-person and online event to celebrate the work that's been done thanks to a \$60,000 Resilient Communities Fund grant received from the provincial government's Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) in 2023. Durham MPP Todd McCarthy joined the meeting virtually and congratulated the team at Camp Scugog on the work that's been done to advance Camp Scugog's Leadership Centre.

"Since 1931, Camp Scugog has provided a welcoming and nurturing environment for GTA residents affected by poverty, trauma, and other forms of abuse, with incredible programs allowing participants to overcome adversity and realize a renewed self-worth" said Todd McCarthy, MPP for Durham. "I would like to congratulate Executive Director Dana Leahey, Development Officer Emily Clark, and the amazing team

at Camp Scugog for taking full advantage of the 2023 Resilient Communities Fund grant by expanding their leadership, camping, and nature program offerings and providing a valuable service to the residents of Scugog, Durham Region and across the GTA." With support from grant, which helped with staffing costs, tech and safety material purchases, website upgrades and with some administrative costs too, the camp focused its efforts on enhancing and expanding the facilities at Camp Scugog's Leadership Centre, strengthening its position as a top choice for leadership development for school groups in Ontario.

Camp Scugog was also pleased to announce that the development of an all-new high-ropes course and expansion of the existing low-ropes course is set to launch Spring 2024.

"We are so grateful to the Ontario Trillium Foundation for their support and belief in our overall mission to cultivate student leaders through personal development, outdoor education, and team building," said Dana Leahey, Executive Director at Camp Scugog. "We've already been able to put into development a high ropes course that leadership groups will get to use this spring."

Camp Scugog is a beloved organization offering an overnight Summer Camp, a year-round Nature School and Day Camp, and a year-round outdoor Leadership Centre. Overall, it is an inclusive and supportive community that ignites potential and nurtures positive outcomes for its campers and staff. CampScugog's Leadership Centre is still accepting school groups for May and June.

"Non-profit organizations across Ontario deliver programming that makes a difference," said Neil Lumsden, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. "That's why funding that my ministry is providing through the OTF is so important. Our government wants to ensure that these programs and spaces remain the heart of communities across our province."

The Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) is an agency of the Ontario government with a mission to build healthy and vibrant communities across the province. Last year, OTF invested more than \$110M into 1,044 community projects and multi-sector partnerships. Projects aim to enhance economic well-being, foster more active lifestyles, support child and youth development, provide spaces for people to come together and connect, and create a more sustainable environment.

## PORT PERRY RESIDENTS ASKED TO STORE EXTRA SUPPLY OF WATER

The Region of Durham has contracted IQ Environmental to clean the water mains in Port Perry as part of the regular water supply system maintenance program.

The cleaning program will be performed between May 6 and 31, said a region statement.

Residents will receive a hand-delivered notice, 24 to 48 hours prior to the start of the cleaning operation on their street.

"The work will be carried out in an efficient manner with the least possible inconvenience to residents. You are advised to keep a supply of water on hand for drinking, cooking and general purposes during this cleaning procedure," the notice said.

This work will be performed during the night between the hours of 10 pm and 5 am the following morning.

It is suggested that affected residents close the shut-off valve at the water meter to ensure that water is not drawn into the home until cleaning is completed. Where this is not possible, it is very important that no water is used for any purpose, including the flushing of toilets, furnace-mounted humidifiers and backwashing of water softeners. If water is used during this period, it could result in material being drawn into the internal plumbing of the home, causing a blockage.

Once the cleaning operation is complete, turn on a cold water tap only and let it run for about five minutes before using hot water, said the notice.