

You may be a millionaire

by BRIAN LOCKHART

At one time, being a millionaire was a big deal.

It meant you were wealthy and had more money than most people would earn in their entire lifetime. You could live La Dolce Vita.

While having millions of dollars still means you are wealthy, there are now plenty of people who would qualify as millionaires. Most likely some of your neighbours would be in that club.

If you have a fully paid-off house, no debts, and have been saving your money and investing wisely, having assets totalling \$1 million isn't rare these days.

This is also during a time that is seeing the greatest transfer of wealth in the country's history. At a time when one generation is passing away, they are leaving their hard-earned assets to their children.

Most of that wealth is coming from real estate. Someone who bought their home in the '60s or even '50s, through to the '70s to raise their families, and stayed in the family home, saw their investment multiply many times in value over the years.

Children inherit that home, put it on the market, and receive a large sum of cash in their bank account when it is sold.

A smart person will invest that money wisely. Although to be fair, taking a vacation or buying a new car isn't a bad thing. You've got to have some fun.

However, many people seem to squander new found wealth.

Just ask former NBA player, Larry Bird, who made millions of dollars playing for the Boston Celtics.

During his career, he was careful with his money, spending little on luxuries, and investing most of it.

At the time, he was ridiculed by some of his teammates, who spent their money on super expensive cars and a jet-set lifestyle.

Thirty years after his playing career ended, Larry is still wealthy and lives a good life. Most of those teammates who laughed at him, are flat broke.

In fact, it was reported that four out of five NBA players are broke within five years of finishing their playing career because they blew all their money on frivolous stuff.

I was acquainted with a woman who lived with her boyfriend and they were getting engaged. Her boyfriend, although a nice guy, worked a menial job, and didn't seem to have a lot going for him.

A tragic accident resulted in the death of both of the man's parents. He was suddenly one of two heirs to their estate.

Less than a month later, the woman was describing a new truck her boyfriend just purchased. It was a high-end vehicle, top-of-the-line. He had the dealership add extras to the tune of \$20,000.

When another friend mentioned he was going to have some pretty heavy monthly payments, the reply was 'oh, he'll be getting the money.'

The guy was already blowing his inheritance before his parents were cold in the grave. You just know this is not going to end well.

While millions of dollars may be a lot of money, there are people who have billions of dollars. At the same time, the government likes to spend money in the billion-dollar range.

The billion-dollar figure is thrown around like it's just money in the bank and there to spend.

Most people don't seem to really grasp the difference between \$1 million and \$1 billion. There is a huge difference.

To put it into perspective, one million seconds ticking away on a clock would take just under 12 days, to count off that many seconds.

To count off 1 billion seconds, would take just under 32 years.

That's the difference between the two numbers.

When you have recovered a massive amount of money through taxes and other government interests, it must be spent wisely.

A quick check on government spending seems to indicate both the provincial and federal governments are doing a decent job of using your money.

However, there are some places they should take another look at.

The public has little opportunity to weigh in when it comes to government spending.

The theory is, you get your chance at the polls.

Voting may give you an opportunity to choose a candidate or party that claims to reflect your values, but it seems we have very little say when it comes to spending actual tax dollars.

When there are billions of dollars at stake, our local representatives can do a better job than just showing up when they get a grant for a local organization.