

# Enjoy the beauty Ontario offers

*Heather Anne Wakeling Lister - May 2025*

I tend to iron whenever ‘what-if’ worries hijack my sleep because threats I have no control over, yet must confront, reduce my ability to think logically and plan a way into calm, sustainable solutions.

My habit began in the mid-70s as a teen in Scarborough when first SKF, then GM closed, alongside interest rates that rose as high as 24 per cent. Neighbours initially lost jobs as companies once loyal, and still profitable, moved to hire ‘cheaper, more malleable’ workforces—next was their homes.

Memories of my mother at the dining room table, counting money into envelopes, remarking “be thankful that your father’s still got a job,” underlined the importance of preparing for the unpredictable. Even still, that decade ended when Dad’s lifetime of stressors that began as a child in the Depression and a soldier in WWII, had accumulated to syphon off much of his health.

Finally persuaded to see his doctor, only to have a heart attack on the examination table, his emergency-experimental triple by-pass not only saved Dad’s life, but was mercifully covered by OHIP.

OHIP used to mail out medical reports totalling the cost of recent hospital or physician care. Had the Canadian public not agreed to equally distribute medical costs through income tax and support universal healthcare, my parents would have been responsible to pay over \$100,000—three times more than their home was worth.

I ironed during the 80s when the stock market crashed, and people, including myself, lost savings. Rent controls were removed, and my rent doubled. Ironing calmed my nerves while Chernobyl radiated without borders, and while unemployed due to lack of prepared foresight of the impact computer technology would have within industry.

Rebooting through various employment options, I ironed through the 1990s Conservative government’s reduction of healthcare funding. Worrying over those ‘what-ifs’, as cuts announced overnight, had by next morning, eliminated thousands of primarily female, full-time nursing and supportive careers.

I’ve ironed thinking through troubling friendship situations, subsequent recessions, business ownership/management changes, cancer, the crash of 2008 that coincided alongside surgery that left life threatening complications—and consequences tethered to divorcing a ‘predictably unpredictable’ person.

Recently my concern doesn’t feel like ‘it’s lack of preparedness or just one more time’ as political and global threats edge closer. Remembering how everything passes in time, I’ve taken to using a visual memory from an office clear-out when 12 recyclable bags contained nothing but shredded paper. Seeing how all that stress was reduced to strips, it became impossible to recall their exact importance.

As Canadian politicians debate how we’re broken, vulnerable, the American president quips at those ‘yipping’ at the theft of their retirement savings, or how ‘country leaders are coming to kiss my a..’, gloating at the begging, ‘they’re whining—they’ll do anything now to make a deal,’ promises to annex Canada as a ‘51st state,’ I think ....

While willing to share, trade, change the time of a political debate to accommodate a hockey game, even apologize for the weather—we’ve expressed solidarity by saying ‘no’ with our pocketbooks, and this, apparently, makes Canadians ‘unpleasant and nasty.’

At the time of writing, it is unclear which Canadian political party will win the federal election, but I hope beyond fate it will be Carney. For it is not a career politician best suited to deal with the financial chaos flowing from the Oval Office, but an economist, one experienced in global world-trade and banking sustainability.

What began as a consumer boycott has morphed into a matter of values, and solidarity—as it’s no longer about politics, but personal safety and economic practicality.

While household budgets pucker-in, Canadian business owners are pro-actively pivoting toward alternative markets, increasing inter-provincial trade and gathering locally-sourced inventory.

My husband Andrew mentioned that “people don’t respect or take seniors seriously enough,” noticing that seniors once willing to vacation in Florida or other warm-climate southern states, are making significant lifestyle changes. Some selling vacation homes as a result of the high cost of living, travel/medical insurance.

Others, citing the lower Canadian dollar and border crossing concerns, have cancelled American travel altogether, and their absence is hitting the U.S. tourism industry hard—a 10 per cent drop

in Canadian visitors could result in a loss of \$2.1 billion in U.S. tourism, and that a sustained decline of 20 per cent could push losses past \$4 billion by 2025.

Our married life has had its unpredictable challenges, yet we have been steadfast through many situations. And despite my worry, Andrew is adamant about making time for a vacation: “as we have to live,” he says.

This summer Andrew wants to cycle through southwestern Ontario. Already planning meandering routes which I will drive along, arrive at a destination town before him and check in at a motel—these mini-road-trips are our way to share our money locally, while enjoying the beauty Ontario offers.