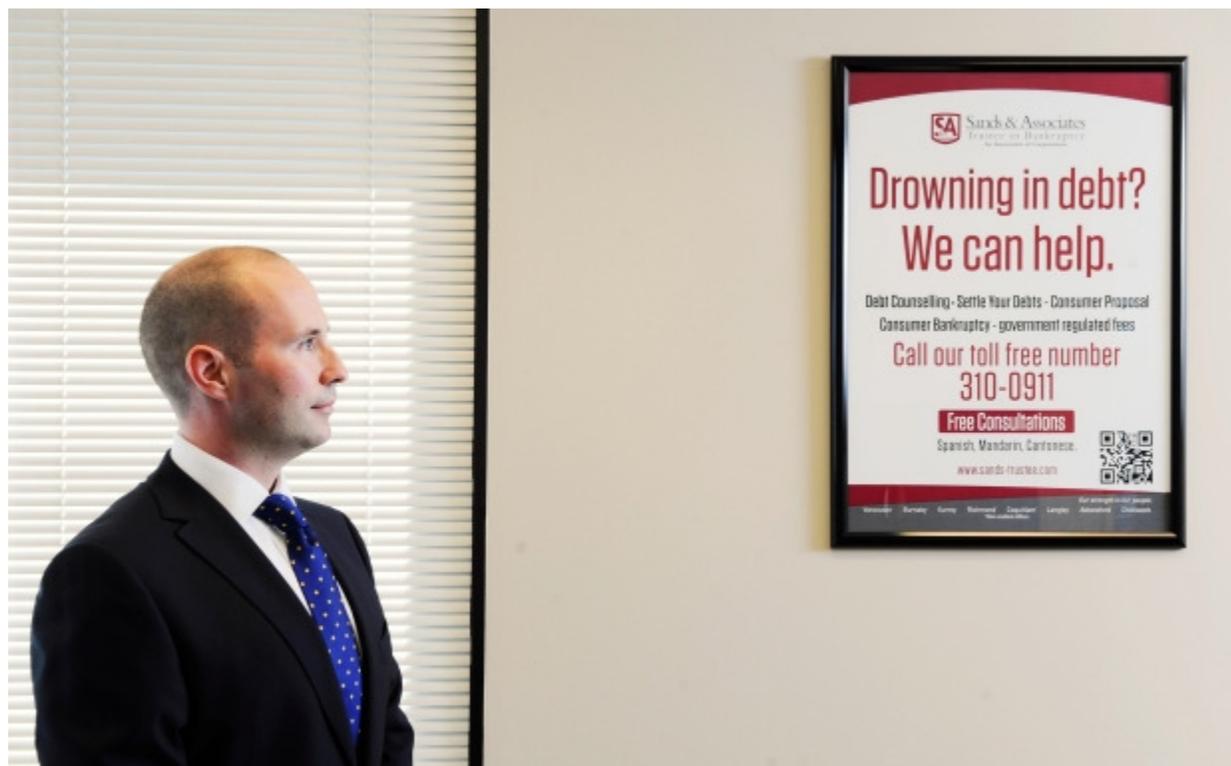


Is it time for you to seek help for your debt?

BY PAUL LUKE, THE PROVINCE NOVEMBER 4, 2012

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Blair Mantin, Sands & Associates, helps older people who get into financial trouble and may have to proceed with bankruptcy, Vancouver, July 10 2012.

Photograph by: Gerry Kahrmann, PROVINCE

Are you the consumer with too much debt that financial analysts like to talk about?

Is it time to seek professional help?

Here are some red flags that typically signal when people's debts have outdistanced their capacity to repay them.

Ask yourself, how many of the following apply to you:

- You use one credit card to pay off another.
- You can't seem to formulate a plan that would let you be debt-free — mortgage debt aside — in three or four years.
- When the growth of your debt is way out of proportion to the increase in your income: If your debt payments have grown to more than 20 per cent of your after-tax monthly income.
- Your debts are so daunting you're tempted to cash in your RRSPs to whittle them down.
- Your finances get so fragile you resist taking positive risks in other areas of your life such as taking a job you love that pays less.

- If you're a homeowner whose budget is so stretched that you have no slack to absorb the impact of an inevitable rise in interest rates. Even a slight rise in interest rates could trigger a significant increase in mortgage payments, possibly leaving you without enough income to service your debt load.

If you recognize yourself in any of these red-flag scenarios, you'd benefit from seeing a bankruptcy trustee.

See a trustee in the next hour, if you're using credit to pay for credit. Blair Mantin of bankruptcy trustee Sands & Associates believes that is the biggest red flag.

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