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New Year, New Attitude?

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It seems that we could all agree 2020 was a disaster of a year for just about everyone.

Frankly, it's not looking like early 2021 is shaping up any better. This concerns me more from a mental health point of view. So many, including myself, have pinned their hopes on 2021 being a better, brighter year, that I fear the disappointment in its failure to do so may have tragic consequences. My intent was to start the year (and this column) on a more positive note, with hopes that the New Year would usher in a whole new attitude. I wonder instead however, if we'll continue to see more of the same old griping, fear and concern that was all too pervasive during 2020.

What follows are a few of my thoughts and reflections; I invite you to be the judge of my attitude.

Rod Phillips: It wasn't just the travel Rod, it was the painstakingly elaborate cover-up. That ?Christmas Eve? fireside message where you're drinking eggnog? Just ? just wow. Your audacity knows no bounds, but at least you resigned. That's a win for 2021.

All the other politicians who travelled over the holidays: That so many of you?not just in Ontario but also throughout our country?chose to holiday elsewhere was demoralizing. I continue to hold a certain naiveté about politicians, assuming that a great many of them enter politics for all the right reasons: to support communities, the greater good and similar motivations. Now, I'm curious. When does that sense of entitlement kick in? Immediately? After several years? Why does it kick in during a global pandemic when the rest of us are solidly sticking to the rules? Who do you think you are and what gives you the right to do what the rest of us can't?

The Future of Caledon: It's a bit dicey this one; hard to predict what will happen when we've already lost 40% of our seats at the Regional table. There is a lot at stake for Caledon, which I have already written about and it's an area we will have to watch carefully. Whether, as our Mayor has requested, the Minister steps in and there is good news and new attitudes or we hear more of the ?same old same old? from our neighbours to the south and the seats are lost forever remains to be seen.

Community Spirit: I was heartened to see the many displays of positivity around our community this past holiday season. There were Christmas light shows around town that acted as fundraisers and people and businesses filling The Exchange with food. (Keep on filling it please, hunger and food insecurity sadly never seems to go away) The Town of Caledon distributing winter activity kits (WinterFest) to children and families to encourage outdoor time, getting active and having fun was a great idea. The joining together of the town and many of our smaller neighbourhoods, hamlets and villages to create ice rinks across Caledon for all to enjoy will be a sanity-saver during these next three months for sure. Thank you to the many people involved in making this happen ? now if only the weather will cooperate. The #LoveLocalCaledon campaign was also an excellent opportunity for us all to support those small businesses forced to close during the worst possible time of the year?and thanks to our Mayor and Councillors for their active support too.

Hope and Resilience: Two things that as a result of indomitable human spirit, almost never leave us. They fade, and 2020 gave us plenty of reasons to potentially lose hope but humans are resilient and we both have, and will continue, to rebound. Hopefully. Thankfully.

Schools as Super-Spreaders: Elementary students only get one extra week away from the classroom while secondary school students will spend up to three weeks learning from home. I'm curious what the difference is? I also remain concerned when I read comments from epidemiologists like Amy Greer who has said that, ?re-opening schools for in-person classes on January 11 is reckless and dangerous.? She comments that closing schools is heartbreaking and acknowledges both mental health concerns and parents working as issues that require careful consideration. That said, she further suggests that ?all the while community transmission is raging (and) our health care system is buckling despite best efforts,? the harms of keeping schools open are far more significant.

Stephen Lecce wrote on Sunday, January 3, that ?leading medical experts have made it clear that schools are not a source of rising community transmission? yet the government IS closing them for at least one extra week. Who are these experts and why do they seem to differ from all the other experts out there who ARE willing to be named and quoted? Why school closures at all if students are not at risk? Confused? Yeah ? me too.

More COVID-19 closures coming: On January 3rd, the City of Toronto's Chief Medical Officer said further measures may be imposed on businesses ?in an effort to slow the spread of the virus.? I don't know your thoughts on the topic but