

Nothing NEW This New Year

by SHERALYN ROMAN

Like so many of you I'm sure, I was looking forward to a new year with anticipation. Perhaps this would finally be the year we escaped the clutches of COVID and could begin actively participating in life again.

Alas, as December dragged along and Omicron numbers rose, (frighteningly so) any hope for a 'new' beginning to this New Year faded fast. Like Jeff Probst might have said on an episode of Survivor, the departing message from 2021 was 'Sorry folks, got nothing for ya ' head back to camp.' The problem? Even the 'camp' is on fire.

Once again, and perhaps unsurprisingly, we've been left high and dry by both the provincial and federal government. While I am the first to agree that everyone deserves a break over the holidays, the virtual disappearance of leadership when our country is now staring down yet another variant - and one that is literally running rampant with exponential growth exceeding 15,000+, is quite simply, unacceptable.

Ontario parents and teachers were left playing a guessing game about when ' or if ' school would start. Daycares were left out of any discussions altogether and there's now mounting evidence that while Omicron itself might be 'mild,' it's not always true and hospital case counts are on the increase. As for healthcare workers, nurses have been begging for help (and fair pay by the way) from day one and are now falling victim to COVID at the same rates as the general public. Hospitals are experiencing Code Orange status meaning no adequate staff for the sheer volume of patients. We are on fire and there is no one left to put out the flames.

To say that those who are hospitalized have comorbidities is adding insult to injury. This could be someone with an autoimmune disease that's either in remission or managed well by drugs but who is otherwise healthy. It could be a child with disability or a senior who is in reasonably good health but has to be careful due to a heart condition. Do these people deserve to be hospitalized or worse? Will their loss be counted as Covid related or simply dismissed as a result of their 'comorbidity'?

We've been watching the numbers rise since well before the Christmas break and I think it's outrageous that no cabinet meeting took place to even begin discussions about potential closures until this past Sunday afternoon. Parents trying to plan for a new year and a return to work and school should not have been left guessing through Sunday night and into Monday morning. Businesses should not have been left hanging about whether they can open or not. Let's say I'm a restaurant owner. Do I order food for the coming week and watch it spoil? Let's say I am a teacher. Do I plan for online learning or in class? Will I be allowed to wear an N95 mask or not? Doug Ford said it took him mere 'seconds' to make his decision based on available information. That information has been available for WEEKS! Further closures are bad enough but guessing when, how or even if they will happen adds unnecessary angst and if, during a purported 5 hour cabinet meeting it took only seconds to make the decision to return to lockdown, we all could have been spared this unnecessary waiting game.

I cannot imagine being a parent having to cope with all of this. I cannot imagine being a teacher and not having access to the basic means of protecting oneself from this virus ' like N95s and filters. I cannot imagine having to live through another lockdown because we are ALL, every single one of us sick to death of lockdowns but I'm pretty sure none of you are literally looking to get to 'sick'to death' from COVID.

I want Wine Spot to stay open because I had an amazing experience there and the Espresso Martini is fantastic. I want Forster's Book Garden and the Caledon Public Library to stay open to feed my book addiction and I'm sure each of you has a favourite you too wish to stay open.

However, without some kind of circuit breaker (as the media has taken to calling it) to stop the rapid transmission of what has finally been acknowledged as an airborne disease, we can't hope to move on in any kind of a permanent way. The US hasn't shut down anything and it's easy to see what's happening there.

It's safe to say there's not much 'new' about this new year.

Our Premier continues to gauge public reaction from behind the scenes waiting until the 'eleventh hour' before making an appearance to deliver measures that are too little, too late.

As a leader, we expect more. It's not always pleasant being the Premier but being the Premier means you take responsibility for both the good and the bad. Step up. Own it. Leadership demands a leader that is out front, visible and LEADING, not someone who disappears for over three weeks while case counts climb to previously unimaginable levels.

We were afraid to go out this time last year when numbers were just 1,000 or so and now we're regularly seeing numbers well in excess of 10,000! Vaccinations help but we need a Premier who does more than acting like a TV host who has virtually nothing for us and heading 'back to camp' for lockdown is, I as previously stated, too little too late.

Yup 'nothing new' going on here in 2022. Happy New Year indeed.