

Comparing apples to cookies - and there is a point here

BROCK'S BANTER

By Brock Weir

Having a sweet tooth is often seen as an inconvenience at best, or, at worst, maybe from the perspective of dental professionals and most parents, an unfortunate trait that should be moderated and controlled.

I'm not going to pick a side on the issue, at least not today, but I will say the sweet tooth, for better or worse, provided me with a very valuable early life lesson.

As a young kid enrolled in a local Beavers program, we were sent out one day in our Gilligan's Island-inspired cap of blue and brown, laden down with boxes of apples.

We convened earlier in the day to pick out the best of the fresh Macs ? it was the late summer or early fall ? that had been delivered to the church basement sometime in the wee hours of the morning. Pick the best, we were told, because it helps bring in the customers.

How do you go about selling an apple? The cuteness factor can only take you so far. Put the fattest, juiciest, or reddest apples on the top to draw in people on the go who wouldn't otherwise be able to get their five or ten servings a day?

It was so long ago I can't remember which sales technique ultimately won the day, but I suspect that my apple cheeks played no small part in helping move the fruit. But not by much. We didn't bring in a lot of money that day, but I thought even back then it would have helped to have been very clear with our objective. Surely if we were raising money to help a specific charity, our base of potential customers at the bank would have had all the more reason to pay top dollar for an apple.

Fast forward a year and we were back at it again.

After parting ways from the Beaver troop after the fun of winning the privilege of weekend custody of a teddy variety of the species wore off, my Grade 1 class fanned out throughout the community to push cookies.

This time the product was the vague part in the process ? more than 50 varieties of cookie tins up for grabs (with probably a fifth of the variety inside) sold from the comfort of a catalogue. The objective was much clearer: raising enough money to build a new playground for the primary grades.

We knew that each tin ordered got us that much closer to what seemed at the time to be the Cadillac of wooden play structures. Parents, grandparents and neighbours knew the cookies they bought served a greater purpose than satisfying a craving, and the cookie suppliers ? well, of course, they were making a mint of their own.

The point is, the whole community had a motive, cause and incentive --- and we certainly moved more cookies than apples. We had good reason to push them, customers were proud to make a contribution, and parents were probably motivated as well to get a few extra tins above and beyond their better judgement just to get their kids to shut up.

It was a very early life lesson for me, as it's an early life lesson for all of us. Yet, for some reason, it took a hell of a lot of time to incentivize the vaccine effort.

Not that we haven't already had incentive enough.

Getting back to some degree of normalcy has been the carrot dangled in front of us since the first approved vaccines began being rolled out and most of us eagerly answered the call. But, at the same time, vaccine hesitancy has been almost as great a shadow looming over the effort as vaccine supply.

For the hesitant, there might have been a valid reason. But, for the vast majority of the hesitant I have spoken to, the reasons have usually fallen into two columns: misinformed spread by various easily debunked conspiracy theories and sheer laziness.

Whichever column they fell into, they were almost invariably united by a common thread: complaining about the health restrictions we're currently living under willfully oblivious to the fact that each shot gets us closer to lifting the yoke they're complaining about.

Now, it is painfully obvious. As of last week, by it's-about-time Provincial decree, each shot will literally get us one step closer to freedom.

In our new and improved Roadmap to Recovery, it will take 60 per cent of all Ontario adults to step up and get their first dose before we can have outdoor gatherings of up to 10 people, sit on a patio with a meal or a beer, and set foot once again into non-essential retail. To get outdoor gatherings of up to 25 people and see organized sports on our fields once more, Ontarians will have to up the ante with 70 per cent of eligible adults getting their first jab and 20 per cent getting their second. Want to get back to the gym, enjoy food in a restaurant, or soak in everything our libraries and galleries have to offer? 70 to 80 per cent of adults will need their first shot and more than a quarter of the population the second.

While we know that now is not yet the moment to open, Ontarians deserve to know the path forward on what we will carefully reopen and when, starting with the settings we know are the safest, said Health Minister Christine Elliott. Brighter days are ahead and we believe this Roadmap represents a path out of the pandemic and will encourage Ontarians to get vaccinated and to continue following public health advice.

This is a roadmap we should have had from the beginning because, unfortunately, for some, stepping up and getting the jab for the greater good wasn't enough. One can only hope these clear goal posts will incentivize people to do their part if doing their part for the rest of us didn't cut it.

We can't compare apples to oranges, and we certainly can't compare apples to cookies, but apples to vaccines? In my experience, and in this case, there might be something to it!