

Confused? Me too

by SHERALYN ROMAN

My first instinct this week was to write about the month of November. Typically it's dreary, wet, all the beautiful fall leaves have fallen and you might even agree with me that the month seems to understand its role in honouring the history of our fallen soldiers by serving up snow or rain or cloudy weather appropriate to the sombre occasion.

But what are we to make of this past week? The weather has been absolutely stellar, allowing us all one last gasp of summer and the chance to be outdoors, winter hats replaced by ball caps and those with a convertible flocking to Forks of the Credit for a Vitamin D soaked joyride. Local restaurants, that surely deserve a break, were hastily reopening patios for those who wanted to enjoy a beverage outdoors. It sure helps with the general mood, particularly in a month that typically doesn't really have a lot of otherwise redeeming qualities.

The weather however, wasn't the only thing confusing recently. While our neighbours to the south have done an amazing job in removing the big orange menace, collectively we spent a long and confusing week wondering why it was such a close race to call? A record number of voters turned out and that's good for democracy but why, oh why, was it such hard work to install a sane, rational and historic (Yay Kamala Harris!) choice to move that country forward? At least now we can all breathe a collective sigh of relief that Donald will soon be removed from any proximity to the nuclear codes. Yet while I take that breath, it's important to remember that right here at home we still have many issues of our own that must be resolved, not the least of which is trying to figure out the new Covid warning system.

The new system employs colour coding meant, I'm sure, to offer a clear visual picture of where we are in terms of danger. Green means 'Go' and red means 'Stop.' Doesn't it? I don't know about you but that's how I learned to drive. Yet under this new province-wide system, while we're at an orange 'restrict' level (one step before red) certain services can reopen. Orange, according to the definition, means hospital capacity is 'adequate.' We know from news reports however, that Peel Region and specifically William Osler in Brampton are overwhelmed and diverting patients. This would seem to indicate we are in a red zone, defined as 'Hospital and ICU capacity at risk of being overwhelmed.' Meanwhile restaurants and gyms can remain open but banquet halls have to close. Restaurants must restrict the number of people who can enter and the number of people seated per table but anyone can walk in to a large retailer, congregate the wrong way in the cereal aisle and virtually no one is wiping down grocery carts anymore. This confuses me.

Also confusing is that many people locally are concerned Caledon is being 'lumped in' with Brampton and Mississauga, to the detriment of our local small business owners. The reality though, as our Mayor reminded us this week, is that 'Peel's municipal borders are fluid and open' our Covid positivity rate is higher than Mississauga's and hospitals across the Region are OVER capacity. I interpret this to mean like it or not, the volume of Covid cases we are seeing this month is significantly higher than what we experienced in the spring, when strict lockdown measures were in place and we were all afraid to step off our front door step. We wouldn't have thought of dining out back then but now, at well over 1000 daily cases in the past few days, we're arguing about where to go for dinner? I'm confused. Please don't misunderstand me. I'm trying to support local as much as possible and took full advantage of patio outings this past weekend. We own a small business too and can appreciate the struggle of local restaurants and small Caledon business owners just trying to survive but now isn't the time to forget we are fighting a deadly pandemic that does not know or respect borders and certainly does not discriminate.

Speaking of continued confusion around the pandemic, I know I cannot be the only one that has noticed the strange coincidence between the rise of Covid cases and our schools reopening. According to at least one recent article, 'kids may play a bigger role in the spread of coronavirus than initially suspected' and 'the latest evidence (suggests) kids older than 10 are just as likely to be infected or infect others.' These comments come from Ontario's science advisory table and yet here we are, still sending our children and teachers regularly to the danger zone otherwise known as school. I fully understand we are balancing the needs of the economy, of precarious employment and of families who cannot both work and home school their children but as a result are we contributing

to the continued rise in Covid cases? I'm beginning to feel we are just one step away from a chronic and vicious circle that will only stop if ? or when ? we return to a period of full lockdown. We have only to look at those countries that have done so (New Zealand comes to mind) to see the positive outcome. Surely, as much as we may resent the intrusion, anything has to be better than this confusing and seemingly endless loop of rising infections; constant closures, subsequent re-openings, classroom reorganizations and advisories that it's safe to dine out but that you can't get married or go to a funeral. Add in the news that you can work out at a gym but not attend a religious service, still get your nails done but not have family over for dinner combined with this new and confusing rainbow of colours warning system.

Is it any wonder I'm confused? Are you?