

Democracy Is Killing Us

by SHERALYN ROMAN

Democracy is meant to be a system where, according to its strictest definition, rule is by the people. That is to say that the people can change their rulers in a peaceful manner and the government is given the right to rule because the people say it may.

It's an imperfect system, but probably the best one that currently exists and in fact it was Sir Winston Churchill who said, "No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all wise. Indeed it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government EXCEPT for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time." I'm glad I live in a democratic country obviously but at the moment, I think it's safe to say that democracy, to some degree, is not only failing us, it's killing us too.

According to much research on the concept of democracy, the five common precepts are that in a democracy we recognize the fundamental worth and dignity of the person, the equality of all persons, have faith in a majority rule scenario that respects minority rights, accept the necessity of compromise and strive to maintain the widest possible degree of individual freedom. These concepts, I'm sure you will agree, are both individually important and collectively the linchpin upon which our hope of "civilized" society rests. And yet, during times such as these we find ourselves in now, an overarching emphasis on the rights of the individual over the rights of the collective are collectively killing us.

For example, until recently, the rights of long-term care inmates (for that seems an appropriate term for person trapped in these facilities, unable to leave of their own accord) were falling victim to the rights of the health care workers who served them, because the health care workers' right to remain unvaccinated was protected, leaving those they care for vulnerable.

As I understand it, PSW's in the community are still protected, leaving those receiving community care at risk.

While many individual hospital networks are overriding government policy (or lack thereof) some hospital workers remain unvaccinated, putting those seeking medical care for other reasons, at risk of COVID.

Teachers in the classroom are at risk, unvaccinated children under the age of 11 are at risk and together even those who are vaccinated still face some degree of risk from the folks among us who choose to remain unvaccinated.

In these situations, the issue of choice in a democracy becomes problematic when one's individual choice potentially impacts many. This is why democracy also demands, at various times the welfare of one or a few individuals (be) subordinated to the interests of the many in a democracy. Think paying taxes for example, or obeying traffic signals. They each serve the greater good, as will requiring certain persons such as health care workers to be vaccinated

What seems to be happening now, however, is that we are listening increasingly to the minority who are insisting their rights supersede those of the majority to remain safe.

The anti-vaxxers are becoming more and more vocal, they are protesting in the streets, outside of health care facilities and even storming large, urban shopping centres as they host vaccination clinics.

First, you're storming the wrong targets; it's the government who set policy not hospitals who are simply trying to cure people (not just of COVID, by the way, but all manner of illness) and secondly, your behaviour is unnecessarily putting us all at increased risk. Yes, you have the right to remain unvaccinated in a democratic society, but democracy holds that a majority will be right more often than it will be wrong and we have determined that vaccines are an effective solution to our current crisis.

For now, that implies the majority should be vaccinated. It has further determined that those without a vaccine will have less access to the community as a whole and that's as it should be. In a democracy, the necessity of compromise is an important consideration

but only to the point of determining ?the position most acceptable to the greatest number.? What is acceptable is that if you wish to ?play well with others in the sandbox,? you have to be vaccinated in order to do so.

Absolute freedom only comes with anarchy and I don't think any of us want that.

However, protestors are causing chaos in the streets, in shopping malls and around our hospitals and this cannot be allowed to continue. Democracy also demands a certain level of responsibility and duty from its citizens and some of us are failing that test. The result is killing others. That's not acceptable.

We cannot continue to stand by and allow the vocal few to dictate what's acceptable for the cooperative (and largely silent) majority. I'll respect your right to stay unvaccinated, if you respect my right to be vaccinated and roam freely while wearing a mask. I don't care who sees my vaccine certificate and ID, whether it's the OPP who stop me during a RIDE check, the ticket agent at the airport before I travel, the LCBO as proof I'm of age to purchase alcohol (ok, that one's a stretch), you get the idea. Show it and move on.

Oh and please, stop protesting in the streets outside of hospitals.