

## Dishing out failing grades to start the year

by Mark Pavilons

My cheeks, squirrel-like with an overabundance of cheese balls, marked my feelings ushering in the new year ??asty at first, yet ultimately unsatisfying.

Attached to the couch, I searched for pearls of wisdom from old sit-coms like Frasier, The Big Bang Theory and Last Man Standing. Modern-day sages to be sure. Yet, my grasping at such TV snippet straws proved fruitless.

I couldn't choose between staying put in the suitably worn couch cushion or getting up to get some pain relievers.

As my cough worsened my thoughts turned to RSV and running out to get the flu shot.

When I was young, we'd have to be dying before getting the family doctor to come over for a visit (yes, I was at the tail end of the house call era).

I find comedy, even jokes I've heard hundreds of times, quite soothing, comforting. Laughing is much more therapeutic than introspective soul-searching. No quick one-liners there; I've checked!

In 2024 I long for less complicated times, when a cough was just a cough and aches and pains were the result of a day of tossing around the ball and not vacuuming the stairs. I also long for clarity and authenticity, not convoluted, confusing rhetoric. Say what you mean and mean what you say are words I've embraced. Yes, I understand all about protocol, rules and political correctness, but I miss the good, old days when a spade was just a spade, nothing more.

I think the world of foggy miscommunication and insincerity have clouded our own thoughts, minds, judgement and emotions. Telling our loved ones we cherish them just doesn't seem like enough anymore.

I eagerly await the return of our favourite TV shows and anticipated new ones. Most are coming back in February, delayed due to the writers' strike.

I try not to think about the holiday over-spending but ponder future purchases on those nifty gift cards I received.

If you watched Jim Carrey's version of The Grinch, maybe you will remember him flipping through the local phone book, exclaiming his distaste for the Whos.

Let's apply that, in letter grade format, to some things in the last year that perhaps generated similar feelings. Where to start?

Let's start with rising food prices, shall we? The feds hope to introduce a grocery code of conduct to address rising food costs. And yet two large players refuse to join in. With record profits, this is a blatant slap in the face of customers who helped generate those massive profits. If there was a grade lower than an F, you'd get it, plus a couple of whacks with a ruler across the back of the hand!?(Boomers will understand this reference.)

New ailments and strains of COVID, or perhaps something similarly horrific.

During the pandemic, we dutifully went and got our shots and boosters. For most of us it worked. For others, they continued to suffer. We're encouraged to get another booster, plus a flu shot plus a shot for RSV.

Are we getting sicker as a society simply because of our day-to-day interactions? Why haven't we nipped this in the bud?

We're all concerned about our health and wellbeing but a constant series of shots may not be the best approach. Let's not forget these are costing the government tons of money, and adding to the coffers of the pharmaceutical companies.

For this very reason, they both get an E for effort!

To the telecommunications giants who cut off your service for not checking their payment records ? you suck! I?just can't image how payment errors occur, with lightning-fast internet payment programs. I?send money to my respective service providers from my online banking and voila, it's done, immediately. Why the recipient can't see or log the payment in minutes, or a couple of hours, is beyond me. And, it seems they're getting more ornery these days when it comes to late payments.

Not so long ago, valued, long-term customers were given the benefit of the doubt, even a grace period. No longer, my friends. We're treated as account numbers, digits with an assigned value. For those reasons, you all get an F for your customer service and total disregard for customer loyalty.

Our roads are getting busier, something we've been keenly aware of for some time. It would also seem that people are in a rush, given the amount of tailgating taking place. If you need to get some place in a hurry leave sooner! Don't follow me within inches and then pass dangerously, only to have me roll up beside you at the next traffic light.

You bozos also deserve an F.

Gas pumps running out of paper. Most of us use self-serve pumps when getting fuel. While these have been around for a while now, they are still prone to glitches. I have had a few instances where the button froze on premium, and I?couldn't choose any other grade. A glitch, or way of getting you to fuel up at the highest level? Lately, the printers have all run out of a paper and I have to dash into the kiosk to get my receipt. Come on people, there must be an electronic warning to change the paper and since your job is often boring, get out and change them!

Taxes, of all kinds. I?read a depressing, yet very accurate comment on Facebook recently that says we pay taxes on what we earn; taxes on what we spend, and taxes on things we already own, which we paid tax on.

Talk about a triple whammy. Every political candidate in every election vows to reduce taxes.

Where are these massive reductions we've been promised?

To those in charge, yes, I'd love to see the carbon tax removed from my home gas bill, and all other areas it's applied. Another sales tax drop would be greatly appreciated.

To the tax purveyors and tax collectors ? take an F.

Along a similar vein, the loans given to small businesses during COVID are now due. How can these struggling, mom and mom businesses come up with the \$20,000 they used up long ago just to stay afloat? The feds giveth, and taketh away.

Here's a big, red F at the top of your paper!

You are now all required to stay after class, or take remedial classes!