

Exercising ?Reasonable Patience?

BROCK'S BANTER

By Brock Weir

The dawn of a New Year is always seen as a double-edged sword of renewal and change.

We want to go into our next trip around the sun with a renewed sense of purpose and a renewed sense of self, all the while keeping in mind that change is another constant that can't be avoided.

But change, of course, means different things to different people.

Change doesn't have to be grandiose gestures of varying levels of substance and emptiness. It doesn't have to be a 180 degree turn on something in a bid to rapidly change your entire lifestyle. It can be as simple as setting a resolution, tackling one area in your life that might need a little bit of a tweak, or merely revisiting your list of life-goals and prioritizing them for the subsequent 365 days.

When a New Year approaches, I always like to ring in the dawn of a new one by doing something, well, new. Sometimes it has been as splashy as watching the ball drop ? or whatever the local equivalent might be ? in a place, exotic or not, I have never been before. It can be watching the clock tick towards midnight with a new group of friends or in a new venue. It can be crossing that threshold of space and time doing something you haven't done before, like watching a new movie, cracking into a new book, or tackling a new game.

For the second year running, I was at a loss at what my new experience was going to be when we made the transition between years.

In the last few minutes between 2019 and 2020, the big excitement was, thanks to the global pandemic, trying take-out from a local restaurant that hadn't previously been sampled and watching a new movie.

This New Year's was shaping up to be a repeat of the same. Don't get me wrong, it's as lovely a way as any to ring in the new year, but, nevertheless, any excitement was dampened by how limited the options were for a second year running.

But, in a not all-together pleasant way, the guesswork was taken out of the evening almost at the eleventh hour.

Thanks to the Omicron variant, some last-minute reshuffling had to take place to ensure New Year's festivities, such as they were allowed to be, were covered for the communities we serve. Therefore, unexpectedly, I was tasked with covering a local event where local families had the chance to get together under the stars for some socially-distant fellowship and entertainment before having the chance to get cozy at home for the dawn of 2022.

It did the heart good to see so many community members come together for a common purpose, having fun and maintaining social distance all the while.

Although I was there for work, it was a nice mental break from the day-to-day slog against the virus ? but it was made slightly bittersweet that, thanks to ever-rising case numbers, this would likely be the last opportunity for such a get-together until public health stats took a dramatic turn for the better.

I nevertheless got my chance to spend the evening doing something new ? and that might have to be the win I take away from the whole experience because it seems my New Year's resolution was over almost before it even began.

In the lead-up to the holidays, I wrote in this space that my New Year's resolution would be to cultivate patience. Always in short

supply with me, the last 22 months have worn down my own personal reserves and, as the reality of Omicron took hold, I knew they would be stripped to the limit ? a changeable reality that would never do in our collective efforts to get through to the other side.

Patience simply wasn't there when the Provincial Government announced that Ontario students wouldn't be returning to school for a further two days into January apparently because those extra 48-hours would be enough to solve all the issues of ensuring students are safe in schools. And the community, in turn, could stay as safe as possible once the end-of-the-day bell rings.

Patience was also absent when the Province bowed to what seemed inevitable to everyone else and announced a further delay to the opening of schools to January 17 ? two weeks and two days, as of this writing. That surely would do the trick?

Patience was gone when all of a sudden testing, which has been one of the primary indicators of any glimmers of hope on the horizon, was deemed a luxury rather than a necessity and we were all told to assume we had COVID if we had the slightest sniffle.

Patience went into the red when the Provincial government attributed staff shortages in hospitals and, indeed, staff shortages across the board, to ?absenteeism? rather than individuals being sick and addressing it accordingly ? or individuals exposed to the virus doing the right thing and isolating accordingly ? as we have been told to do since March of 2020.

Patience continued to plummet when the Federal Conservative leader suggested people unwilling to get vaccinated against COVID-19 should be ?accommodated? through rapid testing and other means. This, it was argued, would be a way to ensure supply chains kept pace.

Don't get me wrong ? I do think reasonable accommodations should be made for people who are unable to get the vaccine for any variety of reasons, but I couldn't help but feel this request for ?reasonable accommodations? was an untimely slap in the face to our frontline workers who have been fighting this thing day in and day out for nearly two years, are burnt out, yet continue to show up for work in conditions that are less than ideal by every stretch of the imagination.

A recent letter-writer to The Globe And Mail asked whether the cost of such ?reasonable accommodations? for unvaccinated residents would be borne by vaccinated citizens. Of course, that question is ?yes? and the subject for another column, but how about a call to our unvaccinated residents to make ?reasonable accommodations? for the people on the frontlines while showing a vote of confidence in our beleaguered health care system and the tireless people who work day and night, against odds that seem to become increasingly dire each week of this latest wave, to both keep us healthy and the system we so depend on afloat for the future?

Unfortunately, it's a debate that is not going to be over any time soon, so, in the meantime, if you have any ideas on how to replenish stores of patience, I think I ? and every single reader of this column ? would appreciate it.

These ?reasonable accommodations? will make it a longer slog for all of us.