

Finding the 'Calm and Bright' this holiday season

BROCK'S BANTER

By Brock Weir

I feel strange to sit down this Monday evening and write my final column of 2021.

In some respects, it feels as though this year has gone by in a flash.

It hardly feels like 12 months ago when we put the finishing touches on whatever our holiday plans were – well, as much as 2020 would allow – before we settled in comfortably, albeit slightly claustrophobically staring down the face of a fresh lockdown, to dream of the positive days that could come with the fresh year ahead.

With declining case numbers roughly corresponding to the more temperate weather of March and April, the warmer days of the spring and summer went by with equally alarming speed, as did our respective autumn days, with memories made along the way almost captured in amber.

By the same token, some of the things that happened over the last twelve months seemed like they happened in a different age.

Despite our neighbours to the south still feeling like a bit of a tinderbox, the Capital Insurrection on January 6 feels like an age ago, rather than something that happened little more than eleven months in the past. The swearing in of Joe Biden, ushering out one area and ringing in another, also feels like something more deeply rooted than a 'simple' transition that happened in the second half of January.

We endured the veritable Hunger Games – and, yes, I'm still going to lean on this literary and film comparison until that blessed day when it is no longer apt – of finding, securing, receiving and, in some cases, weathering, our first and second doses of an approved COVID-19 vaccine. We've endured the frustration and anger that some of us felt when vaccines other than Pfizer or Moderna were suddenly found to offer less-than-desired protection with more-than-desired side effects.

We saw a significant change in our public life upon the death of The Duke of Edinburgh.

We went through another event which could have significantly changed our public landscape even further with the call of a Federal Election – but, for better or worse, that significant change ultimately failed to transpire.

We're once again enduring the frustration of finding, securing, receiving and, in some cases, weathering, our booster shots as new cases of COVID-19 once again ramp up; and, once again, we're putting the finishing touches on whatever our holiday plans are, hoping, yes, again, that we can dream of the positive days that will surely come with a fresh day ahead.

As short as 2021 appeared to be, we have packed a lot into the last 12 months.

We did what we could to make it as bright as possible, were heartened when that light at the end of the tunnel began shining ever-brighter before more recent setbacks somewhat cooled the glow – and, to that end, we have every right to be sick and tired of either being sick and tired or going above and beyond to avoid getting sick and tired.

Now, as COVID-19 rages, our goalposts, be it to fatigue or simple logic, are now as close as: 'Let's just try to get through December 25 without catching Omicron.'

I completely understand it. I feel it. But we have to keep plugging away.

Having suddenly become eligible for a booster along with all other Ontarians aged 18+ who had their second dose more than three months ago, my personal quest began like many others, scouring the length and breadth across all reasonable distances to secure mine.

While I'm thankful to have been successful fairly early on in the process, the frustration and tension I walked into almost instantly upon opening up the door to one particular pharmacy was palpable. Like so many drug stores who booked appointments according to their expected supply, yet received significantly less than was expected on the morning of, they were undersupplied ? and, truth be told, understaffed ? leading to many frustrated patients and customers.

But this frustration was also shared by the staff who were on site who went above and beyond to administer what they had while trying to allay the fears and, indeed, anger of those who were unable to get boosted.

In my observation, most were understanding, recognizing that despite the fact that while it has fallen out of our once-common parlance, we are still all in this together and these frontline workers are trying to make the very best out of a bad situation. It must also be remembered it is a situation they hadn't necessarily anticipated before the Province opened the floodgates of eligibility on Wednesday afternoon.

And the same goes for doctors, nurses and other primary care providers who are trying to grapple with the onslaught of both Omicron and those who are doing their damndest to try to avoid it, business owners who are having to deal with a reintroduction of capacity limits during what was anticipated to be their busiest season, not to mention dealing with customers with whom patience already runs a bit thin during the holiday season, and restaurant owners who were so hoping that they would be able to get back on their feet by the time 2022 rolled around.

After a spring and summer that gave us a welcome taste of a return to normalcy, having it snatched away from us in relatively short order is not the ideal situation for any of us, but we have to make the best of it.

What choice do we have?

We can complain to the people we see every day, but they have complaints of their own ? and chances are, they are the same as yours. We can cast blame around on how we got to where we are, but the rest of the world is already crowding our collective boat. We can wallow without paying any heed to the many blessings we enjoy and often take for granted.

Well, we can do just about anything, but before doing, let's do some thinking.

We're all going through a difficult time, one which might make it difficult to put on the merry face we all like to put on at this time of year, but while I think we can all be forgiven for our merry being spread just a little bit thin at this point, we need to find patience within ourselves and others to get over this speedbump.

Speaking as someone whose patience is admittedly usually in pretty short supply, COVID has forced me to uncover some extra patience in my system just ready to be tapped; necessity, of course, being the mother of invention. Fostering further patience sounds like a good New Year's resolution for me, and for us.

Until then, I wish you a wonderful, warm and safe holiday and a joyful and healthy 2022!