

Full speed ahead in 2026

by BROCK WEIR

The New Year didn't waste any time getting into full swing.

Many of us had to shake off a bit of snow ? well, more than a bit, depending on where you are ? to get back into the office on Monday morning and, again, depending on your level of post-holiday Zen, could have been a bit more of a challenge than you would like on your first day back to the office or school.

After a few days off, it's nice to slip back into the routine rather than get thrust back into it, but we don't necessarily write the rules.

After what was, for many, a fraught 2025 on so many fronts ? economically, politically, spiritually ? I know there was a lot of hope in the air that some of this would ease over the next twelve months and we would be able to collectively look ahead to brighter horizons.

Those hopes were dashed relatively early on when the world was thrown into significant uncertainty following events in Venezuela, as conflict still rages in Ukraine, despite multiple perspectives on how peace can be achieved, as many parts of the Middle East remain nothing short of a tinderbox, and, here at home, the affordability crisis continues with little abatement.

With so many issues facing our world at the dawn of a new year, it was somewhat disconcerting by comparison to have what was possibly our quietest start to the New Year in recent memory.

Typically, I like to start the year off on the right foot by spending the evening, or the first few hours of the fresh calendar, doing something new. It doesn't have to be big ? it could be something as grand as a trip within Canada or abroad, or as quiet as raising a drink with friends and family.

This year, however, the only new things that were enjoyed were two movies we had never seen before on New Year's Eve, and the creation of a new cocktail, given the eclectic mix of bottles we received over the season of giving. It had been a pretty intense and busy period leading up to the holiday, so we didn't feel any guilt spending it a bit quietly and while it was quiet indeed, it was time well spent.

There is something to be said about finding peace amid the quiet every once in a while.

As a budding journalist, one of my most formative experiences was time spent working overseas. Access to the internet in this location was, at the time, a bit spotty, and calls home exorbitantly expensive, so before setting off one of the factors that made me feel a bit uneasy was being disconnected for extended periods of time.

Was it a fear of not being in touch?

A matter of potentially missing an important event with the power to change the world until hours after the fact?

A bit of both?

Maybe.

Looking back, despite being a man who depends on news, matters of public interest, and all the wonderful things that fall under the umbrella of ?human interest,? it seems so silly to feel that way. Yes, the world is more connected now than ever before, so those fears of the early 2000s are now basically moot, but having that time away from a cord, device, or, in short, a screen, was a veritable

luxury in hindsight.

As I wrote in my last column before the holidays, one oasis of calm we traditionally find as a family is the King's Christmas Message, as it often serves as a great way to set the tone for the year ahead.

I couldn't help but smile this Christmas Morning, however, when the King's words touched upon just that ? finding that calm, that peace, wherever you can.

?Pilgrimage is a word less used today, but it has particular significance for our modern world, especially at Christmas,? said the King. ?It's about journeying forward into the future while also journeying back to remember the past and learn from its lessons. We did this during the summer, as we celebrated the 80th anniversaries of VE and VJ Day. The end of the Second World War is now remembered by fewer and fewer of us as the years pass, but the courage and sacrifice of our servicemen and women, and the way communities came together in the face of such great challenge carry a timeless message for us all. These are values which have shaped our country and the Commonwealth. As we hear of division, both at home and abroad, they are values of which we must never lose sight.

?As our world seems to spin ever faster, our journey may pause to quieten our minds, in T.S. Eliot's words, at the point of the turning world, and allow ourselves to renew. In this, with the great diversity of our communities, we can find the strength to ensure that right triumphs over wrong. It seems to me that we need to cherish the values of compassion and reconciliation, the way our Lord lived and died.

?These stories of the triumph of courage over adversity give me hope, from our venerable military veterans to selfless humanitarian workers in this century's most dangerous conflict zones, to the ways in which individuals and communities display spontaneous bravery, instinctively placing themselves in harm's way to defend others. As I meet people of different faiths, I find it enormously encouraging to hear how much we have in common, a shared longing for peace and a deep respect for all life.

?If we can find time in our journey through life to think on these virtues, we can all make the future more hopeful?. That prayer for peace and reconciliation, for doing to others as we would have them do to us, which rang out over the fields near Bethlehem more than 2,000 years ago, still reverberates from there and around the world today. It's a prayer for our times, and our communities too, as we journey through our lives.?

A pause does more than just quiet our minds. It can help each of us restore the mental bandwidth that we have to take on all the challenges that lie ahead with renewed vigour, determination, and perhaps even a clearer view of what ultimately lies at the finish line.

It affords us inner peace where external peace might be harder and harder to come by these days. Perhaps if we all take the time to find it, we can collectively harness it for the greater good.

We certainly need it this week and, if it's needed that much in the just the first full week of the year, we're going to need more and more time for these restorative pauses.

In the meantime, welcome 2026, and all the challenges ? and joys ? that you have in store for us!