

?Hope Springs Eternal?

by SHERALYN ROMAN

As is tradition this time of year, the clocks spring forward and Canadians - easily duped - begin to believe that spring has in fact sprung, even when there is copious evidence to the contrary. One has only to attempt to make their way around Town right now, navigating mountains of snow, and to gaze in a mixture of awe and disgust at the amount of snow plowed into various parking lot corners, gathering debris, salt and other detritus, to know that spring is very much NOT around the corner. In fact, even the hint of spring is but a whisper in the wind.

That said, by the time you read this column, a scheduled, and massive, amount of rain is scheduled to have fallen and temperatures were set to rise to as high as 13 degrees celsius (or for you old folks like me, about 56F) meaning it's high time to break out the shorts! Yes, that's another thing Canadians do. At the merest hint of warmer weather we begin to see a plethora of pasty white legs poking out from beneath last summer's rumpled up shorts, even if on top we are still wearing a parka and toque! It has got to be a uniquely Canadian phenomenon that I suppose we happily lay claim to - interpreting it to mean that we are a ?hardy? bunch. If by ?hardy? we also mean kinda dumb, then yes I guess that's us.

I know many of you welcome spring. You see it as a sure sign of what's to come; summer and pool parties, patios and plenty of sunshine. You are unaffected by the time change and breeze through the slush in your sandals with nary a frozen toe. Me? Not so much. I hate spring. I used to tell my kids that ?hate? is a very strong word and not one we should regularly use but for me, there is no better word to describe how I feel about spring. You leave for work in the morning (for some of us, that's now back in the dark again) scraping snow and ice off your car, dressed in a turtleneck and knee-high winter boots and a scarf and return home in the evening looking like a transplanted, inappropriately dressed tourist in Miami because the temperature has climbed to 20C (again for you old folks that's about 70F) in just a few short hours. If you thought navigating through the snow was challenging, in spring, every curb has you practicing the long jumping skills you haven't used since elementary school phys-ed class as you attempt to hurdle over the giant, melting mess. In spring, you have to dodge cars whose drivers seem to get a particular joy out of driving too close to those melting puddles of sludge looking to saturate unsuspecting pedestrians with an enormous spray of puddle guts. It's not just water after all but all that road salt, trash and leftover ice chips that make it feel not just like a shower but a pelting.

Perhaps you think to yourself, ?Well the Town looks dirty and gross so I'll embrace this brief amount of sunshine between rain showers and go for a hike instead.? I hope you have a great pair of rain boots because ? MUD. Not just mud, either, but other brown stuff too. Yes, I'm talking about all those folks who took their dogs for a walk over the winter, and who seem to think that poo just magically disappears in nature. It doesn't and it means you had better watch your step every step of the way. That goes for folks in neighbourhoods too by the way. Is there anything more disgusting than the spring melt making your local park look like a big, giant dog toilet? C'mon folks we can do better. I know winter is freezing and maybe you think poo freezes too (can you actually say ?poo? in a family newspaper?) but let's be clear, it doesn't disappear!

In my own backyard spring means the annual return of our pond. We don't actually have a pond, of course, but a certain lower lying section of my backyard turns into a quagmire of fairly epic proportions. This is to the delight of the two rescue dogs in our home who must have come from the wild originally because they think the pond has manifested into being for the express purpose of playing in it, drinking from it and even attempting to swim in it. It's all so ?cute? and fun to watch until they try to come back into your recently cleaned house, or (as has happened) you get a hefty vet bill from having to treat whatever intestinal disorder they picked up while slurping up said pond water despite your best efforts to block them from doing so.

What else can I say about spring? Honestly not much. Sure, maybe there's that brief delight in noticing the first shoots of my peony bushes poke through the ground but it doesn't last long. After all, no sooner do I notice them and briefly get my hopes up when along comes an ?unexpected? spring snowfall burying them once again and a foot and a half of snow. I wonder if the onset of spring is where the expression ?hope springs eternal? comes from? Spring gives us false hope for better days ahead. Sure, they eventually come in the form of summer but meanwhile?sludge.