

Hoping for the best, preparing for the worst

by BROCK WEIR

Are you someone who likes to be surprised?

Do you thrive on the unexpected, throwing away any plans you may have had for your day, opening yourself up to whatever opportunities come your way or to ride out whatever ?fate? might have in store for you? Or do you like to sketch out a general plan for your day ? either rigidly down to the minute, or with a bit of flexibility built in if an unexpected hurdle appears on your horizon?

Admittedly, I'm not sure where I fall on any of these questions.

While I thrive on some sort of a routine just for my own mental health, one of the joys of this job is that no two days are exactly alike and the news unfolds in real-time. But, in the same breath, something unexpected and significant happening can often result in the best-laid plans being cast aside.

Some people work best when they're on some variation of a strict nine-to-five workday, but that's not necessarily for me; I'd get bored before too long and might long for a bit of unpredictability.

Alas, there aren't many things that we can accurately predict these days.

Heck, even some of our more high-profile weather-predicting rodents couldn't come up with a consensus on when spring weather might roll in when they went to work on February 2; perhaps a predictable result when we come to bank on a groundhog cosplaying a sundial to predict the weather rather than meteorological trends.

Still, when it comes to guarantees, the old adage of death and taxes always apply. We also know that when an opinion of any kind is expressed online in this day and age, there is always going to be a contrarian in the crowd who is going to argue that the sky is actually green, that our planet is flat, and that claiming water is wet rather than a substance that makes other things wet is an affront to all water-based, water-drinking, and water-composed animal life forms.

But not much else had a predictability factor these days ? until this week.

On Monday afternoon, Canadians breathed a collective sigh of relief when the looming threat of crippling and nonsensical tariffs from our American neighbours were postponed by a few weeks following two eleventh-hour phone calls between the Prime Minister and the US President.

It had, of course, been a nerve-racking weekend for most Canadians after Trump confirmed he apparently fully intended to proceed with the tariffs this week, but there were some shining moments amid the mayhem and uncertainty.

Some of these highlights included a quick response from our Federal, Provincial and Municipal leaders to take comprehensive retaliatory action, earmarking items coming in from the United States; the Premier's decision to remove all US-produced beer, wine and spirits from LCBO shelves; the quick response from Canadians across the country to make a sincere effort to Buy Canadian, pooling knowledge to make the transition as easy as possible, and differentiating between the sometimes-confusing ?Made in Canada? labels; from a political perspective, the outgoing Prime Minister giving what history might well remember as possibly the best speech of his career; and a growing realization that having a Federal election at this time of extreme uncertainty? might not be the best idea floating around these days.

Apparently ?all? it took was a flurry of calls and Federal bucks to enhance already-announced border security measures.

"I just had a good call with President Trump," said the Prime Minister in a statement late Monday afternoon. "Canada is implementing our \$1.3 billion border plan - reinforcing the border with new choppers, technology and personnel, enhanced coordination of our American partners, and increased resources to stop the flow of fentanyl. Nearly 10,000 frontline personnel are and will be working on protecting the border.

"In addition, Canada is making new commitments to appoint a Fentanyl Czar, we will list cartels as terrorists, ensure 24/7 eyes on the border, launch a Canada-US Joint Strike Force to combat organized crime, fentanyl and money laundering. I have also signed a new intelligence directive on organized crime and fentanyl and we will be backing it with \$200 million. Proposed tariffs will be paused for at least 30 days while we work together."

Working together will be key - but even though we've heaved that collective sigh, at least temporarily, it's important we don't let our guard down.

It is only a 30-day reprieve and I fear, with some degree of certainty, that we'll be back at this again in March.

In fact, given our response - a response which, in my view, was entirely correct - we could very well have the tariff threats hanging over our heads in one way or another for the next four years - and potentially even beyond.

Yet, there is a tendency - for reasons I can't quite understand - for people not taking Trump's threats too seriously and take him at his word. "It's just bluster, he wouldn't actually do it," some people crow, only to find themselves eating that crow before too long. And, before too long, they're back at it again, and often express shock or surprise when fate flips them that bird again.

Perhaps that's one of the few things of which we can be certain for the time being.

If the President perceives the "deals" made Monday with Canada and Mexico were ones in the United States' win column, it will continue to be a looming threat to achieve whatever political whims he might have down the road.

Not even down the road, he's already telegraphed a few other goals - including opening up Canada's banking markets further to U.S. competition and, of course, the complete annexation of our country - so buckle up and stay vigilant.

Monday's last-minute decision to postpone things for at least 30 days resulted in our leaders walking back many of the retaliatory actions that were put on the table over the weekend - including, alarmingly, the Premier's decision to hold off on ending the Province's \$100M deal with Elon Musk's Starlink to expand high-speed internet in more remote parts of Ontario - but we still need to do our part and let our wallets do the talking in the meantime.

Governments should continue to look at ways to Buy Canadian and even Buy Local when it comes to contracts. Homegrown businesses should look to support homegrown suppliers and manufacturers. Canadians writ large should continue efforts to be discerning with their purchases, buy Canadian wherever they can - not excluding foreign-owned businesses that make their products in Canada and, in turn, keep Canadians employed.

We've got a reprieve, but the threat isn't going away any time soon.

Don't be surprised when the threats come back, just be prepared.