

Living in a world of 'no longer's?

by Mark Pavilons

We're all hearing about the 'new normal'.

While catchy, I don't think it's a thing. Our behaviour now, and in post-COVID-19 Canada, will definitely be 'new'.

I'm not sure just how 'normal' it will be. We will have to adjust almost everything we know, and everything we do, to accommodate living in a post-pandemic world.

Most likely, we're entering a new dawn, an age of 'no longer's'. No longer will we be doing things the same way. No longer will we take certain things for granted.

Unfortunately, this has been a very hard lesson for us to learn. This latest 'test' of humankind's strength has taken thousands of lives here in Canada, and roughly 350,000 across the globe.

This will be long remembered as the year of COVID-19.

I never thought I'd ever be part of a pandemic of such magnitude. I fear there may be more tragedies on the horizon, not the least of which is a climate emergency. I long for cures and solutions to all of our current woes. I long to a return to 'routine'.

We will stay calm and carry on, as the human race has done so many times in its history.

Many, yours truly included, have hoped this summer to be a great one, filled with travels and family memories. Sadly, these will likely be quite limited. It's questionable whether we will even be able to visit a cottage.

Hopefully we've seen the worst of this scourge and better, happier times are yet to come.

I've written and read many human stories over my years in this business so I won't be quick to flip to the back, and those proverbial happy endings.

Most of us have already adapted new habits, patterns and routines.

One of the most recognizable changes, when I reach into my wallet or pocket, is a lack of hard cash. During this pandemic, many establishments refused to take cash, opting for credit or debit. One tap and you're off. Some even suggested washing the 'dirty money'.

LendEDU, a company that helps consumers learn about financial products, used a scientific device that tests for bacteria on a given surface to examine just how dirty credit/debit cards and cash really are. They tested the front and back of 41 different debit and credit cards, 27 different bills and 12 different coins. After calculating the average germ score for each payment method, debit/credit cards turned out to be the dirtiest payment method.

Dirt aside, I've had no need to carry cash and in some respects don't miss it at all.

We've long been promised that we would one day be a cashless society. Perhaps this recent string of extraordinary events may prompt the move even further.

If you think about it, almost every retail store and service establishment takes plastic, or intangible money. Even CRA accepts

e-transfers. And, it's the only way to shop online, something that has grown exponentially in recent weeks.

Sure, an absence of greenbacks would eliminate those cool scenes in gangster movies, but alas, even criminals use offshore accounts and e-transfers.

Our attire is changing.

I like wearing costumes and I may even get used to masks, should they become commonplace. I've seen many spiffy examples of what I'd call 'designer masks,' and I suppose I'd go for a fancy one should the powers that be make them mandatory.

One thing some may not have thought through is the ramifications for law enforcement. If wearing weird masks becomes the norm, it could make tracking down the bad guys a bit tougher. We wouldn't think twice about seeing someone with a mask and face shield enter a bank or jewellery store. The cameras and facial recognition software may not be able to adequately identify these people.

I think the clear plexi shields in place in many places, especially grocery stores, will remain. They're not bad and if they offer even a little more protection, then I say let's keep 'em up.

I hope I won't always have to pay for my coffee with a debit machine at the end of a hockey stick, but I do like the Canadian touch. Getting a fresh Hortons brew delivered to the office, now that's a trend I can live with!

I'm sure most businesses will implement some tougher cleaning protocols and this is something we can all get on board with. Even putting more hand sanitizers, at every conceivable location, would be a constant reminder. Yes, there's a cost associated with this, but it's something we all have to absorb.

We will all likely up our game on the home front, too, with stricter cleaning procedures whether it's more vacuuming, changing furnace air filters more frequently and even buying portable or permanent air cleaning systems.

After all of this, I doubt many of us will be obnoxious waiting in line. After weeks of lining up outside it's now something we take in stride. One study indicated that we spend 5-7 years of our lifetime waiting in line! In recent weeks, I can attest to spending hours upon hours waiting on hold for customer service and in drive-thrus.

Maybe we'll have a better appreciation in the months to come.

Will the pandemic exercise make us better people and more compassion to our fellow men and women? That remains to be seen. I do hope that some smidgen of goodness can emerge from these dark clouds.

Maybe road rage and obnoxious behaviour should be put on the list of 'no longer's.