

Memory is a fickle thing

by SHERALYN ROMAN

The human mind is a miraculous and beautiful thing. Too bad it is also complicated, subject to raging hormones like testosterone and estrogen, and while generally malleable in the early years, becomes more firmly 'set in its ways' as time goes by.

It means entire generations of humans arrive on this earth unfiltered and unfettered and many leave it, sadly, with blinkers firmly in place, unable and unwilling to appreciate a different perspective from their own and often memories are at least in part, to blame.

The problem with memory is that it's a fickle thing.

What's prompting all these thoughts about memory? A few things. Recent elections here in town, the elections taking place south of the border and around the world, and the upcoming Remembrance Day observances. Fading memories of a still raging pandemic and how we treat(ed) those directly responsible for our health care and our education are also top of mind.

Frankly, it's because I worry about the role memory plays in these and in so many other situations.

Our own elections locally were filled with enough drama to keep a courtroom riveted for days.

Perhaps not so much drama as the convoy invoked while they overstayed their welcome in Ottawa, and which is now costing us likely millions of dollars to investigate, but drama nonetheless. It's always a sad day for me when people who care about community, are willing to stand up for what they believe in, then face public backlash.

For those that do it for a second term, I can only assume memories of the games, gaffes and potential for grift are just faded enough to justify a second, third or fourth run. Too bad human nature being what it is, the games, gaffes and potential for grift never really disappear.

Local elections were worrisome enough, but the outcome of what will happen south of the border could have consequences for decades to come - consequences that perhaps may extend far beyond US borders. Remember when we all thought Trump could never, ever, possibly be elected? Or, that he would never, ever, NOT relinquish the title of President after losing the election, or even that he wouldn't dare to encourage an insurrection? I do. I just wonder how many Americans will?

The role of memory when it comes to health care, education and whether there is a pandemic or not are also top of mind for me and I think it's because of fear. Not so much fear of the unknown. After all, we sort of know what Covid is capable of now and whether we choose to or not, there are vaccines available. It's more because, once again, I fear memories fade and we are none of us the better or wiser because of it. Having spent significant time in ER waiting rooms lately I can tell you first hand that they are an absolute nightmare. I would prefer to use the term s**t show but this is a family newspaper.

It wasn't because of the nursing staff or doctors either. I witnessed them literally running from patient to patient, trying to resuscitate a coding patient, doctors chasing down their own x-rays and nurses valiantly struggling to provide care, concern and even privacy in stunningly awful circumstances. The 'emergency' surgery necessitating visit number one happened six days after the accident - six! During that time there was no care, no assistance whatsoever, just the advice to go home and wait, in severe pain. After the emergency surgery, inadequate discharge care required another emergency visit where more of the same was witnessed only this time the situation was deemed 'critical' enough that only about 12 hours passed between diagnosis and admittance to the hospital. Remember when we used to bang pots and pans and thank front line workers? Sadly, these days all I witnessed was a lot of yelling, very little compassion and an enormous amount of frustration - from patients that is. Underpaid nurses subject to Bill 124, terrible pay and awful working conditions are somehow still (mostly) meeting standards of care.

When it comes to education and our memories, it's anyone's guess. Over the course of just five days we saw the government ram through legislation denying education workers the very right to strike or to collective bargain. All in the name of 'keeping kids in schools.' Since when does the Ford government care about schools? Talk about a memory lapse! He gave away millions to refund us all a few hundred bucks for license plate stickers and just before passing Bill 28 he sent parents another \$200 or so in what soon became clear was a shell game to distract us from both the legislation being passed and the little nugget of information that Mr. Ford was again coming for the greenbelt. He must not have remembered his promise not to touch it!

With all the money flying around, you'd think there might have been some available to pay EAs and ERWs in our schools, since they are the ones who deal directly with children living with exceptionalities, some of whom are at risk of violence.

When Ford came to the podium on Tuesday, November 8, to announce what we all already knew - that his government would repeal Bill 28 and return to the bargaining table, he claimed it had been their intent all along to negotiate and the bill was nothing more than a negotiation tactic. If memory serves me correctly, he didn't 'remember' this until the strange coincidence of 20+ other union heads joining CUPE on the podium to announce a general strike. I'm hoping everyone remembers these Lecce/Ford bully negotiation tactics in time for the next election but if memory is to be relied upon ? somehow I doubt it.

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