

# Pandemic has sparked innovations

by Mark Pavilons

Human history is filled with some very amazing accomplishments.

It seems that some of our greatest achievements arise out of the ashes like the mythical Phoenix ??ood things come from very bad experiences.

Humankind's work in aeronautics, jet and rocket propulsion, was advanced decades due to the Second World War. German scientists worked around the clock to make major leaps in all of these areas. After the war, many of these scientists were conscripted to work for NASA. The space program was quickly accelerated because of war-time research.

Other inventions that came from the war included synthetic rubber and oil, pressurized aircraft cabins, radar and helicopters.

Tragedies often spawn improvements or greater efficiencies. Only when we suffer great loss can we work to prevent it from happening again.

Improvements in firefighter gear often come from loss. In fact, many major fires have led to improvements in safety regulations, building design efficiencies, and firefighter equipment. We are now much better at saving lives.

Breakthroughs in medicine all followed major disease outbreaks and pandemics.

The current COVID pandemic has led to vaccine development in record time around the globe. How researchers work and develop medicine has likely taken a major leap forward. As work continues on the current batch of vaccines, perhaps some other ?cures??will emerge. Science often ?stumbles??on treatments while looking for something else.

With pharmaceutical companies making untold billions from COVID vaccines, I only hope they can direct more of their profits to cancer research.

There's no question our society has adapted and evolved in many ways.

And technology has played a major role. We switched, in a matter of months, into a digital world. Online services ??rom consumer goods to municipal services ??rew tenfold.

Online learning, government meetings and interviews via Zoom and YouTube are now commonplace. A year ago, few of these were in common practice.

Technology associated with online platforms has lunged ahead and we can expect even more great things from here on in. In the past 10-20 years alone, we've witnessed some incredible advancements. Here are some: GPS-enabled devices (remember those odd-looking gadgets for the car?). Now any of us can ask for directions to anywhere on the planet. Hybrid and electric vehicles. The Tesla first appeared only 12 years ago. How about ?texting?? It was introduced by AT&T in 2000.

How about Wikipedia, iTunes, Google, smart watches, drones ...

A report from the Brookfield Institute for Innovation + Entrepreneurship (BII+E) explores the biggest social, political, economic, environmental and technological trends driving Canada's labour market in the decade ahead.

The rapid adoption of remote work is something that is here to stay.

Using strategic foresight research and interactive expert workshops, the 'Yesterday's Gone' report identifies and explores eight megatrends with the potential to impact employment in Canada by 2030.

Key findings from the report:

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated pre-existing trends such as automation and digitization while forcing society to rethink many of our assumptions about how we work and learn, and our socioeconomic structures and systems.

COVID-19 has given rise to new trends, including a heightened prioritization of meaning and well-being in our work and lives. While some changes may be temporary, they could have longer term implications for the labour market.

Topics that may seem unrelated to Canada's labour market, such as floods, air pollution, and responsible AI, all have the potential to impact the future of work.

The writing is on the wall for gas-powered vehicles, as almost all major manufacturers have vowed to end production by 2030, in place of electric cars. Our penchant for technology, and newfound direction for research, may in fact, accelerate this, too.

Undoubtedly, battery technology will improve, too, to the point where we have uber long-life AAs, car batteries or button cells.

Since we've grown more attached to our smart gizmos, this industry will only grow exponentially.

During the pandemic, many of us have been secluded and sheltered, with only our gadgets and the internet for companionship. Some may have realized their own personal tech is out of date, so they're seeking the ultimate in connectivity. I bet we'll see a surge in phone and laptop technology very soon. From pocket-sized drones taking photos overhead, to remote-controlled robo-vacs, our lives are filled with gadgets and gizmos.

Our tech-propelled society will simply roll right over us in the coming decade.

And yet our needs are likely quite simple, emerging out of the darkness.

I'm am looking forward to enjoying backyard BBQs again, perhaps sprucing up the yard.

I want to take my family on outings again, maybe to a lake or cottage.

I want to enjoy life's simple pleasures.

And I want to forget all about the pandemic. It's one story I really don't want to share with future grandkids.