

Part Two ? Language Lessons

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It seems last week's lesson in language brought to light some troubling omissions. Not content to wait until the 2022 edition of the updated dictionary, we've been requested to continue the list of words for which the pandemic has created entirely new meanings. Without further delay, here are a few more words for our revised 2021 pandemic dictionary.

Iron Ring: Remember when Mr. Ford announced after the first wave of COVID-19, that he'd put an iron ring around long term care facilities? I think there might have been some confusion and that perhaps Doug switched out ?iron? for Swiss cheese. Iron ? I had to look this up ? is indeed one of the world's strongest metals but I'm not sure anything would have been strong enough to protect against the virus when in actual fact his statement was nothing but talk. When the second wave hit and nothing substantive had been done to protect our most vulnerable residents, we all came to realize that talk is cheap and iron rings are in fact very, very expensive. I guess seniors aren't that valuable after all but I hear Swiss cheese together with ham on rye is delicious.

Boy in the Bubble: Does anyone remember a movie from back in 1976 starring John Travolta? He has no immune system and lives out his life in a ?bubble,? a completely enclosed area of his home where he's protected from everyone and everything. He can only attend high school after agreeing to wear what amounts to a hazmat suit complete with its own air supply. These days, bubble means ?oh, wait?.now that I think about it bubble might still mean the same thing! If we're not careful, pretty soon all the folks not obeying the rules about staying within their bubble will force us all to ACTUALLY live life like the boy in the bubble. Living in a bubble has also taken on another significant meaning. It's now something to look forward to. Being invited IN to someone's bubble is a great honour and privilege! These days, you really know you're someone special when a person forsakes all others and invites you to their bubble. Fortunately for everyone, both the rule followers and the anti-vaxxers alike, doctors and nurses continue to voluntarily work in their bubble-like hazmat suits to save us.

Going Parking: I may be dating myself but if you've ever had a flashlight shone through the window of your car by the cops while parked on a deserted stretch of road or empty parking lot late at night, chances are you were ?parking.? These days, after having been in lockdown for about 3,142 days, parking has taken on an entirely different meaning. In the dead of winter, meeting in a parking lot with the window down, a coffee in hand, the heater on and a blanket is the only way to hang out with your friends and has nothing to do with the old way of ?parking? if you catch my drift. Shouting across the empty parking space between us, simultaneously laying waste to both our gas tank and the environment has become the only way to see friends safely ?in real life.? I suppose technically we're still breaking the law and a cop could come by at any time to chastise us but at least we'll be in broad daylight and no flashlights required!

Physical Distancing: When I went to high school, Friday night dances were usually a pretty hot ticket. Nothing made for a fun night more than a few hundred hot, sweaty teenagers dancing in the crowded cafeteria with all the tables pushed back against the wall. The best part of the night was the slow dancing, a chance to snuggle up to your favourite guy or gal ? that is until the parent or teacher supervisor silently and suddenly appeared beside you ?suggesting? you put a little physical distance between you and your dance partner. Catholic schools took it one step further with the advice to leave room for the Holy Spirit! These days, physical distancing has come to mean not standing next to anyone, EVER. The advice is to stay at least 2 metres apart at all times, unless of course you're at a big box store with barely a buggy between you or queuing 6 feet apart while waiting to hop on a crowded plane where you'll spend the next four hours sharing an armrest with a total stranger. At least your dancing days are long behind you.

Long-Hauler: This term used to be a job description but now means something significantly different. Formerly your friendly truck driver, a dedicated frontline worker committed to getting the goods to wherever they needed to be; now sadly a long-hauler is someone who still exhibits a myriad of life-altering symptoms long after they've been ?cured? of COVID. From hair loss to the loss of taste and smell, long-haulers continue to suffer with no real end in sight since so little is known about these long- term impacts. Mind you, not to make too light of the issue, I can't help but think there's a few long-haul truck drivers out there who've sipped their fair share of crappy coffee that was either tasteless or tasted so bad they wished they couldn't taste it!

I'm sure there are more examples to share but I'm equally sure there must be a limit on how many new definitions can be added to the dictionary in just one year. There has to be some kind of limit. I know there are certainly limits to our patience and to our willingness to continue complying with the ongoing haphazard and seemingly arbitrary limits being placed upon us. At least one new clarification of meaning was recently published that I think we can ALL agree on. Peel Public Health has 'corrected' their recent flyer encouraging parents to isolate exposed children alone in their rooms with meals delivered to their door. Mind you, I'm not sure there's a parent alive who would have complied with that ridiculous piece of advice. One would think it's just common sense NOT to leave a child unattended for 14 days. Then again, unfortunately the words 'common sense' could probably do with an updated definition too.