

Positivity soars while positivity plummets

Written by SHERALYN ROMAN

There are very few words left to explain the situation we find ourselves in that have not already been overused. We're sick of hearing about 'challenging times,' or to 'pivot,' and in particular, the word 'lockdown,' especially when lockdown doesn't really mean lockdown for some retailers.

As positivity rates soar, positivity plummets while the pandemic continues to wreak havoc amongst us. We're experiencing physical illness, impacts to our mental health, possibly a loss of income and/or family supports and so much more. As a result, despite the holidays fast approaching, our ability to think positively has taken a real hit. Perhaps you'll agree the word, 'positivity' has two definitions and they couldn't be farther apart!

All around me I see the obvious signs of the pandemic, particularly as positivity rates in our Region continue to increase. Just this past Monday, we reached an all- time high for cases in Peel Region.

We are at the point where numbers are rising exponentially and that's not a good sign and could mean a very bleak holiday season for many. COVID is impacting our health care workers who support us when we're ill, family members who grieve the loss of loved ones (many of whom continue to die alone in long term care facilities) and many local business owners who are suffering tremendously as a result of these most recent lockdown measures. A lockdown that strangely only seems to impact those small, independent business owners who acted on a dream, took a risk and 'jumped in feet first' with hopes of making a living doing something they love.

Such a risk requires a level of positivity that is unimaginable to most. It requires faith in your product or service, a belief in community and in your dreams. Sadly, with this most recent lockdown, those same folks, once brimming with positivity are very likely now questioning how much longer they can remain in business. Previously positive that the holiday season might help them to recoup some of the losses of these past eight months, that sense of positivity has plummeted as they now stare down the face of a depressingly bleak December. Meanwhile, big box stores continue to reap the benefits while risking our health in crowded aisles.

On the other hand, we've seen some evidence of a rise in positivity amongst some members of the community and from our Town Councillors and Mayor who are actively promoting the #ShopLocal movement.

They have faith in a positive rate of response from our community. Faith that people will come out to dine and shop in support of local business. 'Love Local Tuesdays' is your opportunity to shop local and dine at home without all the hassle of cooking by choosing from the wide selection of restaurants Caledon has available. Many of these restaurants are offering take out specials and our small retailers are offering curbside pick-up. Some local businesses are also offering delivery service. It's become a bit cliché but let's never forget that it's your local grocer who supports non-profits in Caledon and your local restaurant that sponsors the hockey or soccer or baseball team your child plays on. Don't abandon them now. If anything, shopping locally is easier than big box because now you don't even have to get out of your car - call ahead and they'll bring it right to you! We may not all agree on why lockdown has only impacted smaller retailers, gyms and restaurants but rather than complain, voice your protest in a positive way by using your purchasing power locally.

Another example of the dual meaning of positivity has to do with attitudes. As the rate of COVID-19 positive results continues to climb in Caledon, we've seen unfortunate examples of racism, frustration, shoppers who are yelling at food service workers or cashiers and generally speaking, folks venting their anger on those who literally have no control over the situation we find ourselves in. It's depressing and can be overwhelming. Yet, we take heart that different rates of positivity are climbing in some neighbourhoods as so many people seek to support community through various donations, organizing drive by parades in place of crowds lining the streets, baking and delivering goods for local residents who are unable to do so, organizing safe food drives or directly sponsoring local families who could use a helping hand. These are good things. The 'Town Support Tuesdays' initiative is

also vital to ensuring local small business are able to stay in business, support both their dreams and their families and maybe even still be around to support your kids' hockey team this time next year.

The government can only do so much. Whether you agree or disagree with their actions at the moment is pretty much irrelevant. We've been told to stay at home to prevent positivity rates soaring but don't let this mandate for the greater good impact your sense of positivity on a local level during the holiday season. Focus instead on what you can do. Shop local, support those closest to you and surround yourself with the folks that matter most ? your family.

At the end of the day, family really is all that matters. My Dad passed away earlier this year (just before lockdown, so I was able to be with him) but this will be our first Christmas without him. There's no other way to say what's on my mind other than ?it sucks.? So please ? for the sake of your loved ones, don't add to the positive COVID rates by crowding out the big box stores and denying the very real impact of this pandemic.

Instead spread positivity when you can, do good things for people where you can and be positive for ? and around - the family that you CAN gather with.

As positivity rates soar, it's up to each of us to not let our sense of positivity plummet.