

## Post-pandemic lethargy curbing our efforts

by Mark Pavilons

I'm tired.

Not in a sleepy, sloth in a tree kind of way. Not a sunbathing turtle type of sleepy.

I'm tired in a life kind of way.

I'm tired that taxes ? income, property and more ? continue to rise and very literally take food of my family's dinner plates. With less take-home income and rising costs, it's getting more and more challenging for average Canadians to make ends meet.

It also makes many of them pessimistic and broken-hearted, creating an everlasting layer of storm clouds, dark and grey the likes of which we've never seen before.

I'm tired of being tired and being sad more often than not. Sure, there were challenges pre-pandemic, but they seemed do-able, manageable, and our goals and long-term sustainability still appeared possible.

No longer, it seems.

Today, ?post-pandemic stress syndrome? has only compounded the daily struggles, which continue to rise. We're way beyond that proverbial last straw that broke the dromedary's back. Our camel friends are buried under the sheer weight and volume of those ?straws.?

I'm tired that my fellow men, women and children, can't move on, succeed and achieve limitless success. Our students have silently absorbed the brunt of the pandemic, and it's shown in lackluster performance, high absenteeism, and simply, overwhelming apathy.

That sense of indifference is also evident in the workforce. Almost every sector of our economy is suffering from a lack of able-bodied employees. There's a lack of summer students, part-time employees and young people getting their first jobs.

I have never seen this before, in my 50-plus years on this planet.

Just when will our young people get back in gear and put their noses to the grindstone?

Helping themselves helps fuel the whole economy.

For we slightly graying, experienced employees, we continue to ply our skills and knowledge to the greater good. As someone who gets a senior's discount at a few large retailers, I can tell you that opportunities for people in my age category are few and far between.

My colleagues tell stories of total disregard by HR folks when my 50-plus brethren apply for jobs. These are jobs they are over-qualified for and yet the 30-something HR people, or resume algorithms, are quite unkind, even brutal.

People are tired, according to hospital administrators, who note that staff are suffering from their own mental health challenges. King Mayor Steve Pellegrini stressed that mental health illnesses will be the next major hurdle after the pandemic is finally over. I'm tired that I see families, in family-run ?mom and pop? shops, working longer hours just to break even. Losses over the past couple of years are very, very hard to make up. It will be an uphill battle for some time to come.

I'm increasingly tired that the glue that keeps our family glued together is thinning, largely due to outside forces. We have to continually shore up the cracks and squeeze out our caking so our household fabric remains intact. It's tough. It's hard. And we're all feeling it.

I'm sad that my children are sad. Whether it's depression or anxiety, or frustration, I empathize with them. But I don't have the cure, or the magic wand to make it all go away. Damn, I wish I could do more.

But again, I'm tired, mired in my own boot-caught-in-the-mud dilemma. I'm sometimes overwhelmed by a lack of confidence and strength in my own meager existence. How can I fight when I'm battle-worn, cold and hungry, huddled in my own personal foxhole?

I'm tired that my own predicament takes away from the real problems and priorities, not only in my family, but with the community and around the world.

My problems seem ridiculous when you consider the plight of Ukrainians, the future of Europe, NATO and more. I have exchanged emails with an acquaintance on eBay who lives near Kyiv. His place of employment was destroyed, so his only source of income now is by selling on eBay.

My oldest daughter is strong, and seemingly not tired at all.

She takes on as much full and part-time work as humanly possible, to help her prepare for the future. My wife is equally steadfast and incredibly strong in her efforts. Not only does she do whatever is necessary to keep our kids' mental health in check, she works extra hard to make sure we have asparagus instead of Kraft Dinner. Without her constant support and oversight, I'd be going to work unshaven and barefoot!

My son pointed out the other day that money cannot be allowed to rule our society. It's nothing but trouble, he said. Either we have too much or not enough. Some are lucky to have just the right amount.

He even vowed that should he become successful, he would keep what he needs, and give away the rest.

How did we raise such good, astute kids?

My tiredness is better alleviated by cucumbers than caffeine so that's something I plan to pursue.

And whatever happened to our promised ?cashless society??

Despite our disdain for the current Russian oligarchy, words by Karl Marx have a great message: ?From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.?

Would that solve all of our ills?

No, but levelling the playing field, addressing widespread need and alleviating crippling debt, will all go a long way to improving our overall health.

Oh, and more green leafy vegetables and exercise! Good luck everyone!