

The lost art of planning ahead

By Brock Weir

?You know what we should do this summer? We should ??

Well, what should we? I thought I knew how that sentence could be completed, but by the time the words started coming out of my mind, I trailed off. What was the point of finishing the thought? Sure, if you're of a particular philosophical way of thinking, there's some value in throwing these things ?out into the universe? to see if they come back to you in some sort of tangible way, but you can only burn so much through exercises of futility.

It's not my intention to sound like a ?downer? but, if this pandemic has taught us anything, it's that it never hurts to have a Plan B, C, D, or E, just in case something gets in the way of what you set out to do.

After invariably bleak Januarys and Februarys, March brings no small shot of hope along with it.

Spring is, of course, right around the corner. Birds are coming out of their doldrums to sing their sweet songs, daylight hours are getting longer, there's a feeling that there are more hours in the day to accomplish whatever is on your to-do list, there's a freshness in the air that has nothing to do with brisk temperatures. Despite your best efforts, all these factors can conspire to buoy you up to make some pretty ambitious goals.

What we now define as an ambitious goal has likely changed over the course of the past year, but however you define them, now is usually the time you start thinking ahead to seemingly endless possibilities.

As the sun blazed down on a cool Sunday morning this past weekend, it was hard not to get swept away by the what-ifs and what-could-bes. With the vaccine rollout ramping up once again, it felt like in just a few ?short? months there would be a return to some semblance of normalcy and, thus, those aforementioned endless possibilities.

But it didn't take long for reality to come back into the scene and rear its ugly head.

No matter what you have on your so-called vision board, putting a checkmark beside whatever it might be is now contingent on so many other factors: the continuing and smooth release of vaccinations, people continuing to do everything that is required of them to squash the curve, and, as trite as it might sound these days, keeping the simple fact that we are all still in this together uppermost in mind.

It was not all that long ago that planning ahead almost seemed like a chore. Now, as this pandemic still rolls out, the ability to plan ahead feels like a simple pleasure we almost took for granted.

How nice it will be to plan a get-together with friends a week or two in advance. Or to plan an in-person birthday celebration for a loved one. To lay the groundwork for a trip out of Town, whether for a lengthy vacation or just an overnight respite away from the same four walls that have formed our world for the past 12 months. To make a shopping list without also having to consider a game plan to get in and out of your chosen store as quickly and efficiently as possible with a full arsenal of PPE to hand.

This longing for days where we had the luxury of planning ahead isn't limited to the individual. Businesses are also feeling this challenge every day.

York Region is now going into the second full week of being back into the Red (Control) Zone of the Province's re-opening plan and, despite a significant uptick in new cases of COVID-19 reported by the Province on Monday, these local numbers appear to be holding relatively steady, an encouraging sign.

In Peel Region, the week started out with a welcome return to some degree of 'new normalcy' with stay-at-home orders lifted and the rest of the area, along with the City of Toronto, being lifted back into the Grey (Lockdown) Zone.

Simcoe-Muskoka, on the other hand, continues its trend towards change at a whiplash rate, lifted back into the Red Zone on Monday, the level in which they were placed in February 16 before the Province slammed the emergency break and threw the area back into the Grey on March 8, leaving everyone with the herculean task of adapting to and rolling with these incredibly complex and rapidly changing punches.

It is anyone's guess how long the current levels in all three regions will hold, leaving residents and business owners alike forging ahead with what is currently required of them while simultaneously holding their breath waiting for the next shoe to drop in this complex and patchwork response to the emergency we're all so tired of.

Until we're in the clear, we're all in the same boat and that's just the reality of it.

Despite these challenges, this week began with multiple observances as International Women's Day converged with Commonwealth Day, a recognition of the unique relationships shared by more than 50 nations around the world. The latter is normally a day that passes with little fanfare, but given the fact this year's commemorations would be virtual rather than in-person, interest was heightened as so many more people were able to take part.

It was also a welcome reminder that no matter how hard we're fighting the fight at home, other nations in this 'family' have had their own share of unique challenges and triumphs over a shared foe.

In her role as Head of the Commonwealth, the Queen released a message reflecting not only the experiences that have come to bind us together, but highlighting how these efforts are now allowing us to look to the future.

'The need to maintain greater physical distance, or to live and work largely in isolation, has been an unusual experience,' she said. 'In our everyday lives, we have had to become more accustomed to connecting and communicating via innovative technology which has been new for some of us with conversations and community gatherings enabling people to stay in touch with friends, family, colleagues and counterparts, who they have not been able to meet in person.'

'Increasingly, we have found ourselves able to enjoy such communication, as it offers an immediacy that transcends boundaries or division, helping any sense of distance to disappear. We have all continued to appreciate the support, breadth of experiences and knowledge that working together brings, and I hope we shall maintain this renewed sense of closeness and community.'

As the light at the end of the tunnel continues to grow, we look back with appreciation on these same tenets, recognizing that many of the solutions we have come up with to maintain what is required and necessary have indeed brought us closer together. It remains to be seen which innovations will stand the test of time as a new 'new normal' approaches. With spring approaching, it never hurts to look ahead, but the ability to plan ahead? Now that's a luxury.