

The Value of Vigilance

Written By BROCK WEIR

Since we began this long, challenging journey, we have not only shifted our thinking on many things but our vocabulary as well.

Although absolutely necessary, I'm sure we're all longing for the days when we no longer have to hear 'pivot' in a business context, leaving it strictly for the choreography crowd. Our present 'new normal' is losing whatever novelty it ever had. 'Frontlines' are no longer just theatres of war, but places our family, friends, neighbours and even ourselves experience on an everyday basis, fighting an invisible foe. A 'pandemic' is no longer a vague notion that impacts some form of 'other.' It is now very much a part of our lives.

'Vigilance' is another one of those words we have heard time and time again for the last 10 months, with its weight increasing with each passing week as numbers continue to rise. We hear it daily from our elected officials at every level of government. We are urged to exercise at least once a week from our respective medical officers of health and, if we're not urged to exercise it, we're invariably told to keep these muscles taut for any eventuality.

In these cases, vigilance is exercised by practicing such well-reasoned public safety measures as limiting public gatherings, avoiding unnecessary travel, staying home except for essential services, and, you know, following the law by wearing masks inside the limited number of stores we can access and when social distancing is simply impossible.

If the last 10 months have taught us anything, it is that some people aren't equipped to 'no', are simply too selfish to exercise this vigilance.

Most of us are, and most of us are tired of it, but we are going to soldier on until the light that is currently at the end of the tunnel engulfs us and guides us to better days.

Until that time, we must tackle being vigilant with renewed determination and vigour.

Little over twelve hours after last week's editions of The Auroran and The New Tecumseth Times went to press, I got up to tackle The Citizen. Focus had to be squarely on the job at hand. The stories that needed to go on the page were largely complete, items from columnists and so forth had rolled in over the night. By midday, it was a matter of assembly and placing content on the page.

As I'm sure many of you were, I had another screen going as I tackled the paper. If you're politically inclined as I am you were dialled into the news outlet of your choice to watch history unfold as the U.S. Congress gathered to officially confirm what had been known to us by the first weekend of November.

Although it was technically a formality and we knew what the outcome would be despite the best and worst efforts of some parties, it was an undoubtedly historic moment that few wanted to miss.

Alas, we had to wait until the wee hours of the morning to see the day's original objective play out.

What started off as a historic ceremony with a rather sad-looking protest going on a few blocks away quickly descended into chaos that ultimately cost lives, including those of two police officers. What some had described as an attempt at a 'bloodless coup' earlier in the day, quickly saw blood spilled and presented us with difficult-to-process images the likes of which had never been seen before.

Reaction was swift around the globe and, outside of the United States, nearly uniform in its shock and horror at this act of domestic terrorism.

‘What we witnessed was an assault on democracy by violent rioters, incited by the current president and other politicians,’ said Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Friday. ‘As shocking, deeply disturbing, and frankly saddening as that event remains,’ we also have seen this week that democracy is resilient in America, our closest ally and neighbour.’

Michael Chong, a member of the Conservative Opposition's Shadow Cabinet, said: ‘The violence of an unruly mob incited by outgoing President Trump that attacked America's national legislature in Washington, DC, that was meeting to certify the results of the recent US election, is an affront to the shared principles that both Canada and the United States have had in common for more than a century.

‘Principles such as a belief in democracy and the rule of law, and in the peaceful transition of power based on democratic elections. Conservatives call on President Trump and his supporters to respect the will of the American people, respect the will of the states who have confirmed these results and respect the will of the American courts that have reaffirmed these results.’

I write this on Sunday night, when what we saw still feels surreal and raw. I have my news outlet of choice running on that other screen just within my line of sight. At this writing, reports indicate the Vice President still is yet to decide whether or not to invoke the 25th Amendment, the Democrats are poised to introduce a second round of impeachment articles, the President is banned from his bully pulpit for inciting insurrection and goodness knows what tomorrow will bring.

If the events of January 6, 2021 have taught us anything it is the world can change on a dime and the various institutions we sometimes take for granted yet hold dear when we're simply reminded of it, can come under siege at a moment's notice.

We might seem a world away from what is going on in Washington, but, at the end of the day, our neighbours' house experienced a devastating fire and the embers, at least at this point, show no signs of cooling.

It is incumbent upon all of us to stay vigilant that sparks from the embers don't continue to spread across the border and start a fire of its own.

On Wednesday, we saw a country reach a crossroads and we need to work together to ensure we never find ourselves in such a situation. As the Prime Minister said last week, ‘Democracy is not automatic,’ it takes work every day.’

Collectively.