

# Today is our new starting point in life

by MARK PAVILONS

Emerging from our caves should be a bit of a reawakening for all of us.

We're seeing the bright light of day for the first time in months. Soaking up the sunshine is amazing, and you can see the joy on the faces of those enjoying outdoor patios.

Humans are social creatures. Sure, we come complete with a plethora of shortcomings, but we also have some rather nifty qualities, too.

God gave us strong shoulders to bear many burdens. My dad always commented what he saw as my strong, broad shoulders.

Over the years, however, they've drooped a bit. The weight, it seems, never wanes, but the muscles tire and tendons stretch.

I came across a great quote, from an America's Got Talent contestant: "You can't wait until life isn't hard anymore to decide to be happy."

This came from a 30-year-old singer who's battling cancer. She nailed it. Life will always be hard, or at least challenging in many ways.

God also gave us the amazing ability to cope, keep going, combined with strong neck muscles to hold our heads high.

Pretty cool if you think about it.

It made me think about a lot of things.

In my life and my career, I've always tried to give everyone the benefit of the doubt. I've encountered literally thousands of individuals over my career, and I take away something from each and every one of them.

I have met many "characters" and, fortunately, this trend continues. People themselves are the spice of life and in my opinion, the more unique, the better. I still smile when I think of some of the odd characters I've met and written about.

There was the cane-stomping minister who was an outspoken opponent to same-sex relationships back in the day. There were local business owners, armchair critics, watchdogs, outspoken politicians. There were people who achieved greatness, and those who suffered way too much. There were high-achievers, and wrongly incarcerated. There have been brilliant scientists and those suffering life-altering illnesses.

God bless them, each and every one of them.

In society, it's quite easy to be judgmental and cast stones, even if your house is made of tinted glass.

I try to look at all the sides. People almost always seek "the truth" or argue that what's presented "isn't the whole truth." From experience, I know that the real truth is often a matter of perception. Sure, you can verify facts and events, but you can't always perfectly recall them because people all have different senses, perceptions, blinders and biases.

The truth, or a reasonable variation thereof, almost always lies in the middle. Nothing is black and white and more often, it's a few shades of gray. Most of the time, those gray textures mix together into a truly unique colour palette all on its own.

Sure, it makes my job (and likely many others, too) difficult and sometimes near impossible. Some say that's the beauty of it all ? things are so interesting and weird where people are involved.

Another thing I've learned over the years is that almost everyone has their own personal agenda. It may be subtle, clear and robust, but often it's hidden, neatly disguised.

Do members of the public, government and various agencies take advantage of the media??Of course.

It's in their own self-interest. But in a way, that's part of our mandate, to help promote and publicize.

I often hear the term ?level the playing field,??but I don't even know if that's possible. We are all so different, from different walks of life, different backgrounds and different socio-economic levels that it's virtually impossible for everyone to be equal.

We have fundamental laws and rights enshrined in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I?revisit this document from time to time, to get a feeling for what this country should be like. It comforts me that we have such a document and set of rules. I?am reassured that in the end, our tolerance, compassion and acceptance of others will prevail.

And that's where I'm going. As society gets ?back to normal,? maybe it's time to tweak our perceptions, maybe even get our eyes checked. We need to see differently.

And we need to make amends.

I have been blessed most of my life. Most of my challenges I brought about all on my own. Sure, I made mistakes. Who hasn't? Do I have regrets??Sure, I do. I feel bad sometimes about decisions or actions that may have hurt others, mostly unintentionally. I am sorry if I caused anyone undue pain or hardship. Do they plague me? Sometimes. But again, that's what my shoulders are for.

We can't put the brakes on and travel in reverse. We are here. This is our new starting point. This is the place from where we move on and move forward.

I?firmly believe in treating people fairly, being pleasant and cordial, forgiving and being open to new things.

As we walk down the street, and see our fellow citizens, we should be grateful that we're part of our rich society. We should be cautious in our judgement because we don't know if that person who holds the door open for us has cancer or lost a loved one to COVID. We don't know if they're recovering from tragedy, or if they've just won the lottery!

For this reason alone, we need to treat people better. We need to BE better.

Let's make that our new battle cry as we grow, evolve and succeed together after a very trying year.