

What are you grateful for?

by SHERALYN ROMAN

There has been a lot of heaviness in the news lately. There is no other way to describe it. There have been so many incidents that fill our hearts with sadness, anger, grief, disbelief, shock, concern and weariness. Add in COVID-19 and these have indeed been ?unprecedented times.? Many of my last few columns have been reflections upon what is happening both locally and farther afield but today I feel compelled to write something a little more joyful; perhaps even a little more hopeful. At least for a day or two, I'd like to try and focus my energies on the positive. As we've just paused as a nation to celebrate all that is good about Canada, I hope you'll agree to join me by asking yourself and maybe even your family members ? what are you grateful for?

COVID-19 has certainly caused much anxiety for us all but as we neared the 100th day of self-imposed quarantine, I used it as an opportunity to share with my family 100 things I was grateful for. Now I won't lie, getting to 100 proved challenging (I topped out at 86) but the exercise itself was an important one in terms of forcing oneself to pause and reflect on what is good in life, rather than dwelling on the bad. I'll admit that my ?kids? are actually all young adults so I've perhaps got it a little easier than some of you with little ones. There is absolutely no way I ever could have helped my daughter with her Grade 12 biology, chemistry or math and with the other two in University I am officially off homework duty. That said, young adults in the home can prove equally challenging, just in different ways and my grocery bills have skyrocketed! But I digress. What I have learned is that I am grateful for this opportunity to be with them. No one is going anywhere so we've been watching both old and new movies, having fires in the backyard (yes, I have a permit) playing lots of cards and board games and invented a few new traditions including Friday night homemade pizza creating new and different pizzas each week. I know with my kids being the ages they are, these kinds of opportunities would never likely have presented themselves without the presence of a virus forcing us all to stay much closer to home. I am also grateful that I come from a place of having some resources to be able to create these new traditions, knowing these are financially challenging times for so many. Being ?stuck at home? has, for me anyway, allowed me to realize I am grateful for what really matters, good health ? and time spent with family.

Our family manufacturing business has slowed down (a situation I know many small businesses are also experiencing) and while it's worrying, I'm grateful I live in a country like Canada where both the Premier and the Prime Minister have stepped up, offering programs and supports that at least lighten the burden of loss ever so slightly. In many nations, we'd be on our own and I'd have far less to be grateful for.

Speaking of Canada, let's face it ? this is one beautiful country. I'm grateful that over the years I've had a chance to camp from coast to coast taking in its beauty. Hold on - let me clarify that. I'm grateful for the sights I've seen, not so much the camping!! Canada is big, it's beautiful, it has something for everyone and it embraces everyone. Yes, we have some work to do, and we've been talking a great deal about that lately, when it comes to honouring our first inhabitants, our past, our Indigenous history and in righting the wrongs of several centuries of systemic racism toward the BIPOC communities. But equally, we welcome with open arms an average of around 250,000 immigrants each year, most starting their journey in our country much as my own parents did, arriving with a trunk, a baby (me) and a few hundred dollars, ready to embrace and contribute to the multi-cultural diaspora we call Canada.

I am grateful for the local politicians who serve the Town of Caledon with such commitment and dedication. There is no greater feeling than emailing your Area or Regional Councillor, and even Mayor Thompson, and receiving a personal phone call, a visit or seeing the request you asked of the Town put forward in a motion at council or actioned immediately, resulting in positive changes in your neighbourhood. Politicians are ALWAYS on call ? even in a pandemic. They are called to be of service, out in the community perhaps even when they too have a loved one who is compromised, yet they continue to serve, donning a face mask or shield, and working together for the greater good.

Let's also be grateful for the many, many folks who are making masks, who are either donating or making them at cost just to help ensure the community is ?covered.? This is especially important now as we move toward mandatory masks while in enclosed spaces, a move I am particularly happy about as some readers may recall I've been advocating for this for some time now. I'm also

grateful for the kindness of neighbours in my community, one of whom went out of her way to purchase and drop off material and thread when my daughter (one of the many sewing masks) was running low. She told us to "consider it a donation" because my daughter was helping keep the community safe. This lovely lady is also making masks herself for donation to nursing homes. Thanks Lisa Gladding and to all the others like you in our community. Caledon is awesome. Canada is awesome. I am grateful to be Canadian, known around the world for being "nice." I could go on. What are you grateful for?