

COVID-19 IS HERE FOR THE LONG HAUL

The recent revelation that Hamilton mayoral candidate Bob Bratina has COVID-19 only reinforces the reality that the virus continues to be a problem.

Hamilton recently announced that people 18 years of age and older are eligible for a bivalent COVID-19 booster. Health officials are recommending that eligible people get a shot in anticipation of what could be a critical winter ahead. As of Sept. 22, almost 84 per cent of Hamiltonians have received a first dose of the vaccine, and 80 per cent have completed their primary series of vaccine shots.

The reality is people are still dying because of COVID-19 even while high-profile decision-makers — including U.S. President Joe Biden — have declared the pandemic over.

The fear is that sentiment will encourage the public not to take the pandemic seriously and ignore getting booster shots.

Canada is doing its part to create a sense of "normalcy" by announcing that on Oct. 1 all COVID-19 border measures will be removed. That means travellers will no longer have to submit public health information through the ArriveCAN app, provide proof of vaccination, carry out COVID-19-related quarantine, undergo health checks for travel on air and rail, or wear mask on plans and trains.

No doubt as researchers learn more about COVID-19 and how it travels, protocols should change to reflect up-to-date safety measures.

For instance, airlines have eased off cleaning airplanes, but are still prioritizing air filtration because the virus spreads mainly through tiny airborne particles.

Although COVID-19 has been relegated to the back pages, the available evidence points to the continued risk COVID-19 poses to the community. Protection comes from receiving booster shots and reduces the risk for people in the community.

But the risk is lost with the passage of time when a new variant evades the immunity.

So a community's level of immunity remains in precarious balance.

For the most part, the so-called "end" of COVID-19 may look significantly different in a variety of geographic locations.

There will be a transition that will include a series of steps that will gradually normalize the facets of social and economic life.

With herd-immunity, population-wide public health measures can be phased out.

Are we there yet? For most governments, they are under pressure to eliminate those COVID-19 measures as the virus becomes endemic and doesn't disrupt everyday life.

But for those people who choose to ignore the continuing risks of COVID-19, the risks remain. There also remains continued transmission with an estimated 10 per cent to 30 per cent of individuals experiencing long COVID symptoms.

It would seem the virus will remain part of society for years to come, whether you want to believe it or not.

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LETTERS & COMMENTARY

ASPHALT SIDEWALKS

Can someone please tell me why we need cement sidewalks? They are expensive, dangerous and require extensive maintenance. After about two years they crack, shift and sink making scooter, skateboards, wheelchairs and walkers practically impossible to navigate safely. We have driveways, parking lots, trails, roads and highways all done with asphalt. It's no wonder they have baby carriages with springs.

GLENN LLOYD
DUNDAS

COUNCILLOR OUT OF DATE

In the late 1960s and into the 70s when women were attempting to apply for what were then traditional male jobs, those in political office were spouting the same nonsense as Coun. Lloyd Ferguson expressed over an appointment to increase diversity on the police board.

I always find it interesting that privileged white males such as Ferguson are threatened when any one who does not look like them aspire for positions that should be opened to every qualified person.

It is indeed fortunate that Ferguson has decided not to run for office again because it is long past due that people with such outmoded viewpoints are hopefully replaced by someone with less bias and prejudices. Ferguson is so fixated in his views he refused to apologize, which more than anything shows he is long past his "best before date" if he ever had one.

EDWARD E. SEYMOUR
HAMILTON

BEST CANDIDATE ONLY

I definitely support and agree with the need for inclusion of persons from all walks of life for the sole seat on the police board. Since this board is mostly

made up of white males, it seems to me that there is definitely a need for some diversity. The best candidate should be chosen regardless of gender or race even if that candidate happens to be a white male.

Lloyd Ferguson's "tongue in cheek" comment is saying out loud what many people will think. I'm glad he didn't apologize.

DEB WHALEN
SIMCOE

WITHOUT REPRISAL

To all those people who are so offended by Justin Trudeau singing, get off your high perch, or while you're up there, do some singing yourself. Even birds do it.

We're not run by the Taliban in this great country and we and the leader of our country are allowed to sing and dance without reprisal.

PAUL MCFARLANE
HAMILTON

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