Out of the woods?



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By Nate Smelle

Bit by bit the world is changing.

With Stage-2 of the province's economic reopening underway in most communities throughout Ontario, it may appear now that we are returning somewhat to a state of normalcy. With more and more people going back to work the number of cars on the road is growing in line with the amount of pollutants we are dumping into the air, water and soil. As businesses reopen, more opportunities are arising to buy as much of whatever we want, whenever we want it. Opportunities to socialize with one another are also on the rise along with the likelihood of inspiring a second wave of COVID-19.

In some ways reverting back to our old way of doing business will improve our lives in comparison to the way of life we have been adapting to in 2020. In other more threatening and potentially devastating ways our appetite to re-adopt our crisis-causing habits of the past seems to be of more importance than ceasing an unprecedented opportunity to redesign a more sustainable and prosperous society.

Of course businesses can't stay closed forever. And sure, it would be nice to have a few beers with your buddies in the basement again. However, I have to wonder whether we are leaping from one stage of the grand reopening of Ontario to the next too quickly.

Would not staying ?closed? a little bit longer - with the exception of curbside services and essential businesses still in operation - be a safer more prudent approach to addressing this global public health crisis?

Would not a little more time to redesign our way of doing business and develop a long-term strategy for sustainability help us put our best foot forward into the future?

Could we not be taking a more careful approach in terms of public health with reopening the economy?

Considering how since the beginning of this mess experts and politicians have been talking about the likelihood of a second and even a third wave, I personally think we have once again chosen to set our sights on short-term profits instead of long-term self-care. Taking into account that we live in a place often referred to as ?Cottage Country? ? a destination with a relatively low number of positive COVID-19 cases ? there seems to me to be a significant chance that reopening the economy just in time for the summer

tourist season is not likely to reduce the potential of fostering community spread in municipalities like ours.

As far as I am concerned, and I hope that I am wrong, we are a long way from being out of the woods yet. Still, the opportunity, our opportunity to turn this crisis to our advantage exists. It is ours for the taking. That is if we choose to learn from our mistakes and apply those lessons moving forward.