

A global recovery



By Nate Smelle

Once again it appears that we are approaching the other side of the pandemic. With the seasonal arrival of sunshine and warmth, there couldn't be a better time for the protection provided to us by the COVID-19 vaccines to start kicking in. Tuning into the news this morning coming out of Canada and the U.S., for the first time in a long while there seems to be an air of hope in the tone of the daily COVID-19 reports.

In both countries, the daily case counts are declining, and the death tolls are slowing their ascent. As another sign of hope, the vaccine rollout has opened up eligibility to all Ontarians aged 18 and older a week ahead of schedule. The province-wide Stay-at-Home order is expected to be lifted in two weeks; and the Toronto Maple Leafs are about to begin their Stanley Cup run in first place in their division for the first time since the 1999/2000 season. Even as I am writing this on my porch, the birds are singing and the first butterfly I've seen this season just landed on my notebook. All evidence in Canada and the United States is highlighting how the combination of lockdowns, masks, social distancing, and mass vaccinations is working. Still, despite these signs of good things to come, I can't seem to shake the feeling that we still have a ways to go before we can celebrate the end of the pandemic.

As every long-time Leafs fan knows, there is a huge difference between looking good on paper, and things lining up on the ice. Likewise, when it comes to the pandemic, although the numbers appear to indicate that we will soon be able to begin rebuilding and living our new normal, in reality, we must be prepared to continue our fight against COVID-19 throughout the upcoming summer.

This news might come as a depressing thought for some, however, as Prime Minister Justin Trudeau recently said, "This pandemic isn't over anywhere until it is over everywhere."

With these words in mind, we must take note of how other countries around the world are still struggling to get the pandemic under control. For example, over the past several weeks, India has added hundreds of thousands of new cases every single day. Today, May 18, India's case count grew by another 264,000+ new cases. This same day, 4,329 names were also added to their national death toll.

As devastating as these numbers are, by all reports, they are likely only a fraction of the real tally, because testing and reporting in the rural areas where the coronavirus is spreading the quickest is grossly inadequate. Considering that India is home to approximately 1.366-billion of the Earth's 7.8-billion people, if COVID-19 is allowed to spread throughout a significant portion of the population relatively unchecked, there is a real chance it could mutate and erase the progress we have made.

Like it or not, we are a global society that has grown beyond the planet's carrying capacity largely as a result of international trade. If the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us anything, it is that no matter where we come from, we all share the same air, the same water, the same soil, and the same home planet. As we begin to re-open here in North America, we would be wise to factor this truth into our recovery plan moving forward.