

## Refocusing hope



By Nate Smelle

Since the dawn of the COVID-19 pandemic, on a weekly basis I have been receiving what can best be described as anti-scientific propaganda. In one way, I would like to run each and every twisted word of this correspondence to provide a glimpse of the big picture. However, because nearly all of these letters are based in misinformation, and in many cases outright lies, publishing them would be a conscious disservice to the greater good. Yet, somehow, as a supporter of free speech, absorbing this weekly dose of absurdity all on my own doesn't sit right with me either.

As comforting as it would be to blame the noticeable increase in the number of people attempting to unleash their weapons of mass deception ? words ? on the COVID-inspired fear fogging people's vision, this type of correspondence has been arriving on my desk since I began trading words for cash. For the most part, prior to the pandemic the majority of the letters dwelt upon fears and issues arising from conspiracy theories commonly promoted by right-wing politicians and lobbyists. If I had printed every page of this misleading information I received regarding topics such as: climate crisis denial; the so-called ?War on Christmas?; the unproven dangers of 5G internet; the rising ?threat? of socialism, I am certain the planet would be a hotter and less hospitable place. Luckily for us, somewhere a forest is breathing a sigh of relief.

Nevertheless, the focus of these letters has indeed shifted and taken on a more aggressive tone since January 2020. Now, instead of trying to convince people to drive and shop more, the authors of these letters ? in many cases the usual suspects writing in prior to the pandemic ? have pointed their attention towards COVID-19 denial; and the public health measures that have been put in place to get us past the pandemic. In the beginning it was interesting to entertain their ideas; and weigh them against potential unknowns and the solid facts proven by science. Nearly 22 months into this global nightmare of uncertainty we are all living through, it has become clear that by entertaining these myths any longer, we are entertaining ourselves to death.

In no way is that statement meant to devalue the joy and enlightenment we receive through entertainment. On several occasions during the pandemic, I, as surely many of you reading this, longed to experience live music, or go to a movie theatre. Now that once again we can do these things, it appears we are on the way out of this unprecedented global health crisis. Looking forward and beyond the pandemic, I can't help but wonder where all the time and energy spent fighting temporary public health measures will be

refocused. As much as this thought scares me considering how these precious resources are currently being wasted, it also gives me hope.

It gives me hope because when all of this is said and done, we have the opportunity to create something better. It will not be easy, and it will take time to heal and reset our course. However, with our time and resources focused in the proper places, we can start to overcome the network of crises inflamed by the pandemic.