

Beyond COVID-19



March 17, 2020

By Nate Smelle

It is often said that hindsight is 20/20. Still, despite the truth to be found in this cliché when a crisis arises there is no sense in waiting for its full force to be felt before searching for and implementing a solution. When a situation is deemed a crisis, it demands our immediate attention and an informed response that also inevitably requires a shuffling of our day-to-day priorities. For this reason the word 'crisis' should never be used lightly.

As we are bombarded with information and warnings regarding how to protect ourselves and limit the spread of COVID-19, to a great extent our lives are left in the hands of the experts. Putting themselves at risk, it is the health care professionals on the front-lines of this crisis making firsthand observations and providing the information needed to shape the protective and precautionary measures helping us endure the dangers of this pandemic.

Keeping an eye on the rapidly evolving situation, and responding accordingly and promptly to the measures being advised is absolutely essential in order for us to minimize the impact of this already catastrophic event. Likewise, it is at least equally as important for us to ensure that the information we are receiving and sharing is accurate. Closely following the COVID-19 outbreak for the past three months I have come to rely on several websites that I have found to be excellent sources of information. A few worth noting include: the World Health Organization, www.who.int; the Canadian Public Health agency, www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19; Public Health Ontario, www.publichealthontario.ca; and, Hastings Prince Edward Public Health, www.hpepublichealth.ca.

As the pandemic's reach widens I have also noticed how the efforts of governments, businesses, organizations, and individuals have been becoming more and more coordinated. Though the pandemic has yet to peak, and therefore certainly has much more calamity in store for humanity, this unprecedented coordination between different levels of government and society gives me hope for the future.

Admittedly, my personal supply of hopefulness was running short until recently when I read a statement from the president and CEO of the United Nations Foundation Elizabeth Cousens. Addressing the global response to the pandemic in a news release published on the WHO website on March 13 Cousens declared 'We can't ignore the fact that this is a truly global problem' one that requires truly global solutions. The case for global cooperation could not be clearer 'communities everywhere are affected, and people want to contribute.'

Why this statement inspires such hope in me is that since COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic, we have seen a massive shift in our priorities as a species away from economic growth at all costs towards survival.

Since I began writing for a living in 2012 there have only been a handful of circumstances that I have felt comfortable describing as a crisis. Climate change, poverty, food insecurity, the rapid loss of biodiversity, homelessness, the protection and affordability of

clean drinking water, and now the COVID-19 pandemic all qualify as crises in my book.

If we are able to come together and coordinate truly global solutions to address a truly global problem that we can't ignore, imagine how many other crises we will be able to overcome if we carry this level of cooperation forward beyond COVID-19.