

BROCK'S BANTER: Small goals, big consequences

By Brock Weir

Most of us are taught from a very early age that we can do anything we set our minds to.

This is the ideal that every parent tries to instill in their child as they grow up, encouraging them to cultivate their dreams, follow their heart, and pursue their deepest-held goals, even if they seem sometimes out of reach.

Every parent wants their child to succeed and be happy in whatever path they choose and, as children, try to buffer them from the reality that some circumstances in their lives ? a financial barrier, for instance, or less opportunity to pursue some form of higher education ? might make the path towards their own dreams a little bit more circuitous than their peers.

The ideas we have to make our impact on their world might seem a bit fantastical on the surface ? like being a scrappy crime fighter inspired by Saturday morning cartoons, or being a daredevil influenced by superhero movies, or being an archaeologist, taking a leaf from the pages of Indiana Jones or any number of video games ? but, more often than not, they can form the seeds that germinate into something much more, something a little bit more grounded in reality, something with no less potential of making an impact.

A police officer, an athlete specializing in an ?extreme? sport, or a history professor, anyone?

We also try to instill in the younger generations that every act, no matter how small, can have lasting positive consequences.

During Pride Month, for instance, there is no shortage of persons whose small or large acts of heroism or resistance can be pointed to as key building blocks in the fight for equality and making a better world for future generations.

Outside of Pride, there are reminders all around us ? whether grandiose monuments, striking pieces of public art, or even a simple street sign bearing the name of an individual who served their community in some capacity ? of difference-makers who dreamed small and large.

We can even find inspiration inside our wallets by taking out a \$10 bill and learning more about how an act of resistance as seemingly small as refusing to vacate a seat at the movie

theatre you have duly paid for could strike a lasting blow to the roadblocks put up on the path towards Civil Rights.

Yet, with some of our leaders, it seems that the significant impact seemingly insignificant goals and gestures can have is becoming increasingly lost.

Perhaps it is a product of bluster and bravado. Perhaps it is another form of resistance: resistance to accepting 'inconvenient truths', because the short-term pain on the road to long-term gain might not be good for political capital.

Either way, it is, in my opinion, a toxic phenomenon and one that needs to be addressed.

Case in point, the Federal Liberals' announcement that Canada would pursue a nation-wide ban on single-use plastics while, at the same time, hold companies responsible for plastic waste to account.

'Canadians know first-hand the impacts of plastic pollution, and are tired of seeing their beaches, parks, streets and shorelines littered with plastic waste,' said Prime Minister Trudeau in a statement. 'We have a responsibility to work with our partners to reduce plastic pollution, protect the environment, and create jobs and grow our economy. We owe it to our kids to keep the environment clean and safe for generations to come.'

Framing the initiative as one that will have a positive impact on future generations is always a safe bet and could be considered a platitude, but the announcement went further, reiterating Canada's global commitment to the environment.

'Plastic pollution is a global challenge that requires immediate action,' the Liberals went on to say. 'Less than 10 per cent of plastic used in Canada gets recycled. Without a change in course, Canadians will throw away an estimated \$11 billion worth of plastic materials each year by 2030. We've reached a defining moment and this is a problem we simply can't afford to ignore.'

The ban, if ultimately passed into law, could see single-use plastics (defined here as plastic bags, straws, cutlery plates, and the like) banned as early as 2021, 'where supported by scientific evidence and warranted, and take other steps to reduce pollution from plastic products and packaging.'

The legislation would also have the Feds work with the provinces and territories to introduce new standards and targets for companies that manufacture plastic products or sell them with plastic packaging so they become responsible for their plastic waste.

The announcement received a swift response from the Conservative opposition, and not without cause.

While the Government couched their proposed ban by saying these bans would only take effect where supported by scientific evidence and warranted, there is little evidence yet to see how this will impact Canadian business, the manufacturing sector, and the bottom lines of the average Canadians.

These questions were rightly posed by Conservative leader Andrew Scheer but, alas, the party took his concerns one step too far in my view, and it played into that very symptom we seem to be experiencing of discounting what we can do close to home to make a lasting positive difference.

Global problems require global solutions, said the Conservatives in response to last week's announcement. Going after responsible Canadian consumers while ignoring the real problems that are happening around the world will do nothing to prevent plastic pollutions in our oceans.

Global problems do indeed require global solutions, hence international agreements from many of the world's most powerful nations, outlining, for instance, targets towards reducing greenhouse gases and having a positive impact on climate change, but change can indeed start at home.

A ban on single-use plastics will never be a magic bullet, but, if the scientific evidence and the numbers ultimately add up, it could very well be a step in the right direction.

Dismissing the suggestion out of hand by arguing Canada shouldn't bother looking at things we can do close to home, that efforts entirely within our own power, however small, are a fool's errand because the world's most detrimental plastic producers don't want to be part of the solution is a red herring and shouldn't be part of the argument.