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THE COVID-19 CRISIS IS A GIFT FOR SAVVY POLITICIANS

By Doug Firby
Columnist
Troy Media

A lot of us are finding we have the luxury of unexpected spare time while we wait to bust out of COVID jail. I am happily using some of my newfound time to slog my way through Churchill: Walking with Destiny, Andrew Roberts' brilliant and exhaustive examination of one of the greatest leaders of the 20th Century.

Winston Churchill is the complex and courageous man who emerged from 10 years of political exile to lead the United Kingdom through that country's darkest hour in the Second World War. What is truly delightful about this work is that it tells the story of Churchill warts and all – his vanity, his oversized ego, his at-times spectacular mistakes and his – how can we put this

gently? – at times anachronistic views towards race.

Churchill was not only a gifted speaker, but also someone who spent a lifetime polishing and refining the art of choosing les mots justes, and at delivering them at just the right moments to achieve the optimum effect.

There are so many one-liners from Churchill, a review of them shows how much he influenced the English language. One of my favourites, and one that resonates more than ever today, is this one that is generally attributed to the great prime minister: "Never let a good crisis go to waste."

Crises, as Churchill understood, are opportune times to bring about changes that would face insurmountable

opposition in more normal times. Naomi Klein, the leftist intellectual, detailed in The Shock Doctrine how the right wing in the U.S. has repeatedly exploited disasters to advance its agenda. It would be disingenuous, however, to suggest such a strategy is used by just one side of the political spectrum. Every political entity, at some point, has exploited a good crisis to get its own way.

Pandemics, such as this one, are just such a crisis, open to exploitation by the nimble-footed. We see companies, for example, tooting their own horns to build their brand as good corporate citizens. Some of it is starting to ring hollow. If I see one more commercial by a company claiming that "We're in this together," and "We're here to help," well . . . I might just hurl my

face mask at the screen.

Incumbent leaders also benefit from crises, if they manage them well. In Calgary, Mayor Naheed Nenshi ensured re-election for himself when he showed poise and common sense during the 2013 flood. In the current crisis, U.S. President Donald Trump has command of the U.S. media, and – were it not for some spectacularly stupid moves – he would have a lock on re-election.

Here in Canada, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau enjoys the gift that keeps giving – 30 minutes of continuous coverage daily from the major news media. Even Rob Ford, Ontario's once-embattled premier, has enjoyed a remarkable resurgence in popularity because he has shown real leadership during

the pandemic.

The fact that Trudeau is able to command continuous and largely uncritical coverage says a great deal about the state of news media. If the news media were in better financial shape, they could assign reporters to go out and do more original reporting rather than just letting the camera run seemingly endlessly in front of this one politician. They could do more fact-checking, or original reporting, rather than relying on the word of someone whose future rests in managing the public spin. They could spend more time with the opposition leaders, seeking out different points of view.

But, alas, the media is not in any position to do any of that, and so much of what Trudeau says is accepted at face

value, unchallenged and unverified. This is partly why this health crisis is paying dividends for the prime minister and his hopes of winning a majority government in the next election.

Never let a crisis go to waste? Some politicians – and I'm thinking of Trump – have wasted the opportunity to create a more statesmanlike image. Others, like Alberta's Jason Kenney, have had to wear the burden of choosing the worst possible time to go to war with the province's doctors.

But Trudeau has learned that just standing in front of a mic and sounding sincere is about all he needs to do to emerge a political winner.

PRACTICAL WAYS TO TACKLE OUR EMISSIONS PROBLEMS

By Ian Madsen
Policy Analyst

Frontier Centre for Public Policy
In the past several months, we've heard dire and angry imprecations and accusations from the new climate crusaders.

They demand total obeisance to their escalating demands. Any critics to their approach to catastrophic global warming are denounced as deniers or heretics.

A new religious-political-social movement has sprung out of this trend: Extinction Rebellion, with the role of secular saint played by the Swedish adolescent Greta Thunberg. They've disrupted government, public spaces and transportation in many places around the world. And they're uncompromising in their demands to bring a swift

end to fossil fuel use.

This movement has found sympathizers among the usual suspects: critics and opponents of free markets, capitalism and individual freedom.

But other than taxing and banning things, they propose no coherent and practical programs to bring about an economy that produces lower greenhouse gases.

There needs to be practical, economic, and socially and politically palatable means to curtail or reduce greenhouse gases.

Fortunately, several ways are within grasp, starting with a source of energy that can quickly supplant coal at electric power generation stations, and is already doing so.

Climate crusaders want to put an end to shale gas exploration but power generated by natural gas emits half as much CO2 as coal-fired power. Natural gas is abundant and cheap. And the international trade in natural gas is growing fast.

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) nations are expected to have much lower emissions in coming years, as a result of greater use of natural gas and renewable energy, and rising electrification of transportation.

The big increase in coal use is taking place entirely in the developing world, with 80 per cent in China and India.

With some strategic investments and policy choices, natural gas could be a preferred fuel choice for power genera-

tion worldwide.

We can also lower emissions with better energy storage strategies. Hydrogen and methane fuel cells, lithium, vanadium redox, and other 'flow' batteries, hydraulic storage and compressed air all could help make electric utilities more efficient. These developments would also encourage more wind, solar, tidal and other renewable energy sources.

Buildings consume about 40 per cent of all energy, through heating, air conditioning and ventilation systems. Higher building standards should make them more efficient, as would mini-grid options that more closely match supply and demand.

Better urban traffic flow would go a long way to reducing transportation fuel use. That

means employing intelligent road grid management systems and introducing fees for those who wish or need to drive in areas of consistent heavy congestion.

A large amount of agricultural, food processing, food service and forestry products waste is left to rot, emitting significant greenhouse gases, including highly potent methane. Similarly, landfills and sewage treatment plants let large amounts of methane escape. A few cities capture this methane and use it, but more can be done in Canada and around the world.

Commercial, government, and other bus and truck fleets can be converted to compressed natural gas (CNG) or LNG, along with railways. This would result in a significant reduction in CO2 emissions and cleaner emissions in gen-

eral. Finally, the oft-overlooked proposal to plant one trillion trees over the next few decades is worth supporting. Depending on the species of trees and the latitudes they're planted in, this could take trillions of tonnes of CO2 out of the atmosphere.

In addition, trade and investment sanctions could be imposed against nations that do little to stop deforestation or even promote it.

Politics is sometimes defined as the art of the possible. These emissions-conquering strategies certainly come with costs, but they're all feasible, practical and would have vast positive impacts. In short, they are possible.

And they make far more sense than the drastic demands of climate warriors.

STATEMENT FROM OSHAWA MAYOR DAN CARTER: PLANNING FOR THE NEXT PHASE IN OSHAWA

On behalf of Oshawa City Council, we welcome the Ontario Government's recent announcements on the gradual and phased approach of reopening the province in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The health and safety of our community members is our number one priority and we look forward to the gradual reopening of our community.

At this time, we remind community members that there is no change to City program changes or services, as well as no changes to the current closure of City facilities and outdoor amenities to the public.

City open park spaces and trails continue to be open for walk through only. Additionally, at this time, City playgrounds, sports fields, the Harmony Valley off-leash dog park and Lakeview Park beach area remain closed.

Beginning on Tuesday, May 19, the City's Pandemic Steering Committee will closely review and evaluate the provincial announcement and Emergency Orders under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act.

In looking to the reopening of certain City outdoor seasonal amenities such as tennis courts or the track at the Civic Recreation Complex, the City must perform due diligence work and ensure that the health of our community members is the upmost priority. The appropriate time to perform due diligence work, including inspection and preparation of outdoor amenities, is required as well as ensuring that the appropriate mitigation measures are in effect prior to reopening outdoor facilities to the public. We look forward to making future announcements.

We are heading down the right path, but we must also remember to continue to follow the recommendations of our government and health authorities.

We are all in this together. We must each do our part and together we will come out of this stronger than before.