

Happy New Year

By Jasen Obermeyer

Happy New Year!

Okay, it's not as new, but it's only been a few weeks since 2019 started, so I can still say that.

I was flipping through a Calvin and Hobbes book and read the final comic strip, where it was about the New Year, describing it as "a fresh, clean start," like having a big white sheet of paper to draw on. I've always enjoyed reading that strip because it evokes so many emotions of the New Year.

Sure, it can be sad thinking how fast a year has gone by. Sometimes we have a great year, one we miss when the ball drops. Others can't wait for that ball to drop. The New Year is a time of reflection and possibilities.

Around the world, from the Thailand cave rescue, the World Cup, the Winter Olympics, a royal wedding, and of course Donald Trump, there was something for everyone.

We lost some cherished celebrities, including Stephen Hawking, Stan Lee, and Aretha Franklin.

2018 was certainly a busy one for Canada, which pretty much had a bit of everything. From the Humboldt Broncos bus crash, the Toronto van and shooting attacks, the record fires in British Columbia, the York University and Canada Post strikes, to cannabis being formally legalized.

Of course, this was an election year, so that dominated the news. The Ontario election was certainly historic. With Doug Ford storming in to take the reins as leader of the Progressive Conservative (PC) party after Patrick Brown resigned following allegations of sexual assault, it was a hotly contested, often mean-spirited campaign at the provincial level. With Mr. Ford becoming Premier, leading his party to a comfortable majority victory that utterly pushed Kathleen Wynne's Liberal Party to the edge of extinction, controversy is the word to describe his term thus far.

Not even going into detail, just some highlights of what he's been up to: the sex-ed program, Toronto city council, cap and trade program, OSAP, and Bill 66.

In Orangeville and Dufferin County, it was definitely a busy year, perhaps the three biggest stories being the tragedy of Kaden Young's death, MP David Tilson announcing his intention to retire come the federal election, and Orangeville council having all seven new members.

Personally, I hated 2018.

It was a long, and difficult year to get through. As previously mentioned awhile back, I moved for the first time, into a new build right beside my childhood home. That dominated my headlines. The move, the construction and completion of the house, simply put, were difficult, stressful, and tiring, as I'm sure all moves and housing builds are.

In the months that have followed things have gotten a bit better, at a slow pace, but a bit better. It's still not great living beside the old home I grew up in for almost 23 years, and adjusting to the new place hasn't been the best at times.

Though the house and move was the big focus for my family, there was one wonderful, joyous event that happened last year that made the pain a little easier to deal with, my brother James's wedding.

When it's a wedding for an immediate family member, it's different. You're there every step of the way. The Buck and Doe was a lot of fun. Being the first time as a groomsman, I got to experience my first bachelor party, where James, with the help of his friends and some Crown Royal, showed me how to have a good time and helped me come out of my shell.

The wedding was just wonderful. Seeing friends and family all together is always great. A personal moment for me ? actually for the whole year ? was when I gave a speech roasting my brother, and praising my sister-in-law, leaving everyone either in tears or red in the face. What made it even better was it was unrehearsed; I just gave an impromptu, on-the-spot speech, which I'm very proud of.

Though the wedding was a bright spot, there was some sadness to follow as a few months later my sister-in-law's father passed away. It was expected, but never accepted, and still isn't. The last time I saw him was at the wedding, and though I'm glad the last time I saw him was for a happy event, and he got to be there, I'm woeful that was the last time I saw him, and he won't be with us in the next part of our lives. But I'm forever grateful I knew him, and came to regard him as family.

And just as the year was about to end, my sister and I got into a minor, but still traumatizing, car accident.

To sum up, 2018 had more bad than good.

Fortunately New Year's Eve was very nice. My family, and friends of James and Melissa had dinner at the same place they got married, and joyously celebrated ringing in the New Year for the first time in a new place.

Reflections give rise to possibilities. I look to completing the new house, to make it truly feel like a home. I look for more smiles and joy, and less tears and sadness. Let's take that white sheet of paper and start afresh.