

Family and friends arrived at the Almonte Country Haven long-term care home from as far away as Toronto to help Emily and Mervyn Tripp celebrate their 73rd wedding anniversary on Sunday as well as Emily's recovery from COVID-19, which allowed them to reunite after weeks apart. *JULIE OLIVER*

OTTAWA ALTERED

To shake or not to shake: Social landscape changes

Pandemic will impact how we relate to one another publicly

BRUCE DEACHMAN

Jim Davies doesn't like handshakes, and avoids them when possible. The Carleton University professor of cognitive science believes this pandemic may help draw an end to the ritual.

"For a very long time, I have wanted to stop shaking peoples' hands," he says, "but it always felt extraordinarily socially awkward to say, 'I'm sorry, I don't shake hands.' There's a strong cultural force that as soon as you meet someone, you stick out your hand.

"But now, I'm expecting that this will be a great opportunity for me to actually implement it, because now people get it. People understand that handshaking is a vector for disease, where they didn't really feel it before. I feel that, from now on, I will, without a lot of social cost, be able to say, 'I'm sorry,

I don't shake hands.'

Handshakes may be just the tip of the iceberg when gauging how our social lives, both personally and professionally, might be changed by COVID-19. Interactions with family, friends and colleagues may take on a fresh new look, as many of the behaviours we are forced or encouraged to adopt during the pandemic could carry over once we're through the worst of it.

Will sidewalk conversations with neighbours continue at a distance? When will we feel comfortable enough to go to a Bluesfest concert, or will the newly found joy we've discovered in jigsaw puzzles and homemade cocktails supplant the need to go out?

David Coletto, CEO of Abacus Data and Carleton professor of political management, agrees that changes imposed during the

COVID-19 pandemic may alter our social landscape, although he, for one, doesn't believe the handshake is at risk.

"I think that with acquaintances, business relationships or people we just meet, the question that lingers is are those norms that existed before — like the handshake — going to continue? I don't see how that goes away; I think it's so engrained into our culture that it would require a lingering fear about this virus."

And that, Coletto explains, is the unknowable variable: the length of time before a vaccine or treatment allows people to return to life without fearing COVID-19.

Particularly in relationships with people we're not that close to, such as business colleagues and other acquaintances, Coletto says "we may see this transition period where there's this hesitation, and an understanding or re-learning about our social networks' comfort with those physical types of interactions.

SEE SOCIALIZING ON **A2**

Party time: 73 years wed, clear of COVID-19

JOANNE LAUCIUS

Mervyn Tripp is 101. His wife Emily is 97.

On Sunday, their family celebrated two milestones with a party that included a drive-by parade of well-wishers. The first milestone was the couple's 73rd anniversary. The second was that Emily had been cleared of COVID-19.

Emily was isolated about a month ago after she tested positive. It was one of the few times the couple had been apart. Ever the pragmatist, Mervyn could see the necessity of being separated, but he's glad they're back together.

"She was something special," he said of meeting his fun-loving future wife after he volunteered to drive a group to a church conference in Cornwall. Mervyn was 22, Emily was 18.

Mervyn was a third-generation farmer near Fitzroy Harbour. Emily Davis lived only a short distance away in Woodlawn.

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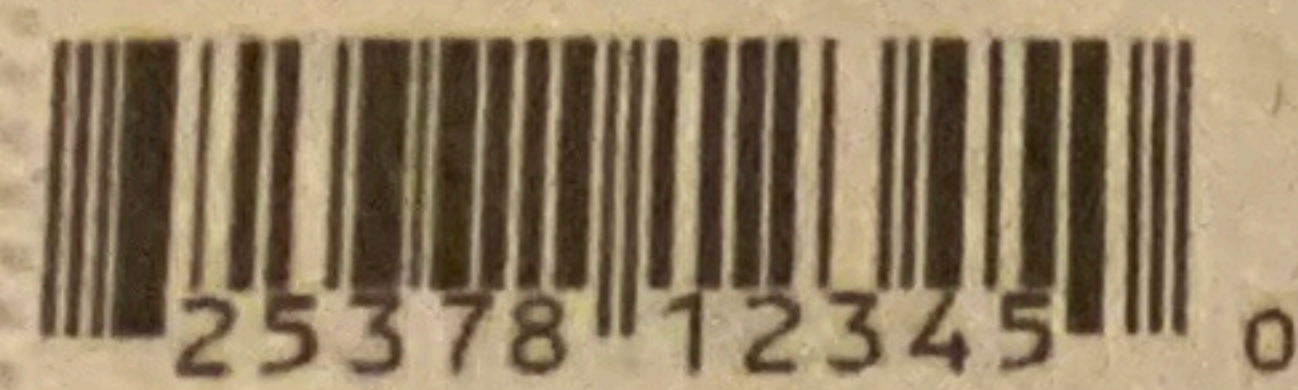
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CITY

There are people everywhere, traffic is almost back to normal, and already we're lowering our guard... It's almost like we forgot March. And I want to scream.

COLUMNIST BRIGITTE PELLERIN. SEE A7



A two-metre separation from others is unlikely to gain traction post-pandemic, suggests David Coletto, CEO of Abacus Data. WAYNE CUDDINGTON

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INDEX

BIRTHS, DEATHS	NP11
CLASSIFIED	NP10
COMICS	A11
FINANCIAL POST	NP6-7
KEN KEN	NP10
NP IN THE CITIZEN	NP1-5
OPINION	A7
PUZZLES	A10
SPORTS	NP8-10
TELEVISION	NP12
WEATHER	NP12

More digital contacts seen following exposure to apps

SOCIALIZING FROM A1

"On the other hand, I'm going to want to hug and embrace the people I haven't been able to for this long a time, the people I love," he adds. "We've missed those really deep, emotional connections with people who aren't in our immediate household, but as we venture out and start doing things with people with whom we don't have a strong relationship, we will probably be much more hesitant to shake someone's hand, to give somebody a hug."

"So I wonder whether this will create more distance with the people we don't have deep relationships with. It may pull people to the extremes."

Numerous factors make predicting post-COVID behaviour difficult, Davies says, including people's fears of infection, the social acceptability of their actions, and what they see others doing. Habits formed during the pandemic may also have a large role.

Davies and Coletto, for example, see a growth in digital contact, including over such video chat interfaces as Zoom, FaceTime and Skype, as more people become familiar with them for both work and social settings. Eventually, says Davies, "it will become a question of under what conditions will people prefer it when they don't need to do it."

He, for example, has taken part in numerous video-chat dinners since the pandemic began. "Although I wouldn't do it with people who live next door, I will with my distant friends," he says.

Similarly, Coletto's family Easter dinner was online this year. "But I don't think I'd want to do



David Coletto



Jim Davies

that on a regular basis," he notes, "because while it was a good placeholder, it was nowhere near what the live experience would be like."

New habits are only likely to stick in a post-COVID world, notes Coletto, if they're deemed at least as good as whatever they're replacing. Flying across the country for a meeting may be replaced by Zoom, for example, but maintaining a six-foot distance while chatting with neighbours is unlikely to gain traction. "I see us fighting the instinct to actually get close to people when we talk to them. I think there are other norms that being distant goes against, so in a way, we're distancing ourselves not because we really want to or that it makes that conversation easier, but because of the norm now to do so for our safety."

At the same time, Coletto expects the pandemic will accelerate trends already in motion, such as online shopping and alternate forms of dining, while mass entertainment such as concerts and sporting events face a possible double whammy, as our initial reluctance to put ourselves in crowded situations may be exacerbated by whatever activities we've adopted in recent months.

A recent poll by Abacus Data found that more than two-thirds of Canadians believe it will take six months or more after distancing restrictions are lifted before they'll feel comfortable attending a music festival or large-venue concert. More than half say it will be at least that long before they venture out even to a pub for live music.

"Once we are not afraid, we might be comfortable going back to them," Coletto says. "But just because we're comfortable going back doesn't mean we haven't replaced them with something else."

He wonders, too, if participation in recreational sports, especially those requiring close contact — rugby, hockey or football, say — will suffer. "I think that until there's treatment, there's going to be some hesitation. How do you have football, when every play starts with everybody kind of head-to-head?"

"We've been talking about what consumers will feel comfortable doing," he adds, "but what are players and artists and musicians and actors going to feel comfortable doing? It's hard to say how this will go, and I don't think any amount of research right now can predict how we're going to settle back into a normal kind of behaviour."

How the pandemic plays out, says Davies, will determine to what

THE NUMBERS

Ottawa, as of 2 p.m. Saturday

5 New deaths

233 Total deaths

9 New confirmed cases

1,896 Total cases

38 Residents currently hospitalized with COVID-19

20 Ongoing outbreaks in institutions, including hospitals, long-term care homes and retirement homes

Ontario, as of 4 p.m. Saturday

25 New deaths

2,073 Total deaths

460 New confirmed cases

25,500 Total cases

Generally speaking, since only a small fraction of all the people who show COVID-19 symptoms are tested, the number of confirmed cases underestimates the actual number of infections.

degree our social lives change.

"If we develop a vaccine and this coronavirus in some sense goes away, I wouldn't be surprised if things went back to normal until there was another scare."

"But if there's a lingering problem, if it hangs on or mutates, or people can get reinfected, then I think there's a higher probability of long-term change. There might be some proportion of people who just will not go see a play anymore, or go to the movies or a busy restaurant. Like ever again." bdeachman@postmedia.com

THAT WAS THEN

A weekly look back at some offbeat or interesting stories that have appeared in the Citizen over its 175-year history. Today, a

SHE WAS NOT GUILTY.
Mrs. Laframboise is Once More a Free Woman—Will Leave Bachelors.
Mrs. Laframboise, who had maintained a firm and composed attitude during her trial for the murder of Sarah Jones, burst into tears through her yesterday