

## Reflections on Summer 2020

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**T** summer that was and wasn't.

Wasn't, as in the world has changed in 2020 and things are substantially different. It is not even clear that normal will be coming back at all.

Was, as in certainly we have had summer in Rural Canada. With little COVID in rural parts, summer was "normalish" albeit with masks. I will grant that there are many fewer Americans than usual and those license plates we do see, are examined with gimlet eye as to their legitimate reasons for being here. However, Canadian citiots are appearing to compensate with their usual numbers and injuries. For political correctness, I hasten to add that a citiot refers to the subset of individuals with behaviour that makes rural residents roll their eyes.

For locals, the cottage/camp/cabin/chalet/bungalow (depending on which part of Rural Canada you hail from) continues to draw opportunities for taking some time off<sup>1</sup> some of them have also seemed to develop a rash of poor judgement and injuries that have accompanied opportunistic renovations accomplished between newly-found interests and the mostly safer hobbies of gardening and baking sour dough.

Locums were a lot easier to find. No one really knows for sure why.

Some say it was because many city practices just closed in the face of COVID and did not need locums. Others said it is the continuing uncertainty, including a second wave, that has caused incumbents to stay put. Women on maternity leave have found that they could work virtually from home. Others state that their reluctance to start a new practice has been influenced by the delayed certification examination.

However, I suspect it may have been the general closure of walk-in clinics that probably had the largest effect on encouraging recent grads to try rural 'locumming'. I do not care much if this is true, or just local fortune, and am happy to have taken more weeks off this summer than ever in my history. Not that I do not like working. The new normal has been a challenge for people like me, who find meaning and depth face to face. There is palpable relief that at least some of 'that' medicine resumed this summer, even if its eye to eye above the mask.

What will the fall bring? Schools, I guess; we shall see how that plays out. I suspect that it will be fine if we do it with a close eye on the positive swab rates and react accordingly. Like it or not, here we go, and we will continue to adapt, 1 day at a time.

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