

## Longing for 'just a few minutes more ...'

Mark Pavilon



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Who hasn't uttered the immortal words: "just a few minutes more?"

Renowned in the morning shortly after the alarm goes off, these words ring out in likely every household in the civilized world. Given the rather inhospitable winter weather we've experienced, I'm sure it's becoming more common in our neck of the woods. As the winds howl and sounds of frost quakes echo, who hasn't pulled the covers over their heads?

It could also be a result of the time of year and lack of sunlight, known to instill the "blahs" in us mortals.

Yes, the spring will be a welcome sight indeed, but then we'll have to contend with the cleanup from the ice storm and perhaps damage to eaves, siding and rooves. The excessive use of salt may also have impacted lawns and boulevards.

Last year was the worst for insurance companies across Canada and the U.S. with record natural disasters like floods and storms. The early part of this year has been equally treacherous. Bad for everyone -- insurance companies and those who pay premiums. Good for those who've managed to get some much-needed overtime work like plow drivers, tow trucks, body shops and public works crews.

Again, in the end we all pay.

How many of us have had one (or more) of those days we wish we could start over? "Just a few minutes more ...?" could have made all the difference in the world.

In our household, there have already been a record number of snow days for the kids compared to previous years. Great for them. For parents, well, that's often another story if they don't have responsible teenagers at home who are capable of taking care of things. I am the designated morning driver for my three kids so my mornings are a little hectic at times. So I am very familiar with the "few minutes more" concept. There have been weekend mornings where I have actually played possum, feigning slumber in order to hide beneath the sheets a while longer.

My two youngest still venture into the "master chamber" in the wee hours or just before sunrise, in a communal sharing of heat. There are times, more often these days, when I don't mind their presence. A cuddle or embrace from one of my youngsters is worth its weight in gold bars.

"Just a few minutes more ...?"

It's reassuring, for both of us. It's comforting.

Our children need to know we are there for them, physically and in spirit. They need to know they are loved and cherished.

I need it, too.

Before you know it, they will be grown and out the door. The cries of "just a few minutes more" will be memories, nothing more. And we'll come to miss them.

Those mornings we struggle, argue and yank them by the feet, seem frustrating and challenging now. But down the road there will be no little toes to tickle, no bottoms to smack and no groggy eyes to widen. No pain, no gain, I suppose.

I admire those who leap out of bed each morning with a spring in their step, eager to meet each new day.

For me, more often than not I'm greeted by a pre-teen heel, elbow or leg. One or both of our yellow labs enjoy digging through the

covers for any exposed body part they can find. I suppose there are worse ways to get up.

This week, our house is a bit quieter, as my eldest is on a school mission trip to aid the less fortunate in the Dominican Republic. The group reported in shortly after they landed Friday, noting it was about 40 degrees C ? almost too hot! I?have little sympathy for these travellers.

This week, there's no reminding my eldest about homework, chores and sleeping in.

She's off saving the world, or at least a little part of it. With a packed itinerary, there's no ?just a few minutes more??for her and the gang. They are likely popping out of bed in anticipation of the day ahead ? or at least as close to jumping as teenagers get these days. For them, the long days are filled with work, spreading cheer and giving where it's needed most. Yes, there will be a few occasions for fun with the Dominican children, playing sports, braiding hair and passing out necessities.

While I?know where she is and what she's doing, I?get an odd feeling each time I walk past her empty bedroom.

One day, all the kids' bedrooms will be empty. While I'd love a ?man cave??one day, I'd much rather share it with my kids.

Given the economy and cost of living, our kids may hang around a bit longer than typically expected. Good and bad to be sure.

But at least there will be more time for ?just a few minutes more ...?

A few minutes more of family dinners or movie nights. A few minutes more of backyard barbecues. A few minutes more of water balloon fights.

A few minutes more ...