

We can make it feel a lot like Christmas



Mark Pavilons]

The lack of snow in these parts has somewhat put a damper on the holidays.

There are several reasons that it's not beginning to look a lot like Christmas. From Syrian refugees, a battle over a severance, and word of a dangerous offender in the area, many may not be spreading joy just yet.

I'll admit it, until very recently, I?was not in the holiday spirit one iota. The females in my life ? my wife and two daughters ? got a head start on their shopping and twisted my arm to get the tree, decorations and lights up early. The tree and outdoor lights have certainly added some colour to the season, but the dreary, spring-like dampness has not helped.

The weather will change and maybe we will see some of the white stuff by Christmas. Many people you talk to would love snow for a week or so around the holidays, and then Mother Nature can get back to spring-like conditions, bypassing the harsh Canadian winter.

I remember a winter a few years back where that happened. Neighbours were in shorts, manning the BBQ the second week of January.

While I am one of the few males who enjoys malls and shopping, I?just haven't been in the buying mood this year. My wife and I?have been married 20 years and there are few surprises, albeit Kim always manages to pull a rabbit out of her hat every year. I simply paid for her purchases at a Coach outlet store. I admit it's not very thoughtful, but there won't be any returns on Boxing Day this year!

People put themselves under a lot of pressure to please their spouses, partners, friends and family members. My daughter was disappointed that her gift for her boyfriend didn't hit the mark. In steps dad offering to buy it from her. What's a dad to do?

I?have found the past few months to be unusually busy this year. This community is a hive of activity and there's been no shortage of news and feature stories to cover in King.

With two of my kids in high school, it's been a crazy fall semester, highlighted by opening my wallet on a weekly basis for this trip, that excursion, a football banquet, tickets to a play ...

My teenage boy is in a bit of a pickle. At 14, he's at that age where the world is starring him in the face, yet still confounds him. He's trying to make sense of it all. Join the club, my son. You are not a Jedi yet, but with the proper training, you may be equipped to take on the dark forces in this world.

For me, Christmas in our house rests in the sparkling eyes of the aforementioned females in my life.

My oldest has a plate filled with activities, volunteering, upcoming mission trips, homework, school assignments and a part-time job. Funny, I don't remember my life being that hectic at 17. But again, our biggest worries were borrowing dad's car so we could go to the movies.

But she has this glow, a determined and positive outlook that permeates her very being. This aura of hers gets even brighter during the holidays. It likely has to do with her giving nature and firm belief that we can all help change the world. She gives me hope.

My youngest is ball of energy. At 10, she thinks she has it all figured out and has gotten the misguided impression that she's in charge. Kids today! But she is a kid and this time of year brings out the kid in all of us.

Her enthusiasm and joy awaiting the big day is almost contagious. When she tears through the wrapping paper on Christmas, her eyes will be as big as saucers and her squeals will fill the air. Those are the moments parents embrace.

My wife Kim has one of the biggest hearts of anyone I have known. She works her butt off to make ensure the decor, atmosphere and kitchen are bursting with holiday cheer. She spoils her children. She says that's how it should be.

She's right, you know.

She has also hinted that she bought me some really impressive, two-part gift that took a lot of effort. I will endeavour to appear thrilled to pieces on the big day!

I am looking forward to some needed time off (I?didn't take any summer holidays this year). I?vow to plow my way through the feasts that present themselves. I?will be one with the sofa and whatever TV series marathons pop up.

I will take a few moments to look deep into the eyes of all who gather, and pause, reflect and take comfort in the fact we're all together and relatively healthy. I will offer up a few extra hugs.

The spirit of the holidays is not neatly wrapped under the tree. It's a feeling in our hearts and deep within our souls.

It's perhaps the only time of year when we can put aside the frustrations, financial woes and stresses of the world and just hide away for a few days.

As I prepare to pause, I would like to extend my personal best wishes to all who know me and have touched my life. That includes you, dear readers.

All the best!