

## Toilet paper and beer

by BRIAN LOCKHART

The first thing I noticed when I went to my local grocery store the other day was there were probably fives times the normal amount of cars in the parking lot.

I thought maybe the store was doing one of their fun promotional events that brings in the crowds, which they do two or three times each year.

Nope, nothing like that going on. But there were a lot more people than normal in the store.

I went to the deli section and ordered some Italian salami.

I asked the girl why the store was so crowded.

'They're all here to buy toilet paper,' she replied. 'It's been crazy all day. We sold out in no time.'

Standing in the check-out line, I noticed the feller behind me had an armful of beer.

'Not buying a month's worth of toilet paper?' I asked him.

'Nope, I got my priorities in order,' he said.

The next day I was back in the store. Sure enough, the entire toilet paper department was empty.

There was a skid in the aisle stacked eight feet tall with new boxes and a stocker getting ready to re-load the shelves. Several people were milling about, getting ready to pounce.

The following day I went to the local department store in Orangeville to buy something not related to any kind of a virus.

The woman next to me had a package of 36 rolls of toilet paper. I noticed that was only the top package. She probably had another 50 rolls in her cart.

I did some research to find out why there is this mad rush on toilet paper based on a virus you may, or may not, get.

This isn't a cholera epidemic ? it's a virus that has no apparent devastating effect on your gastrointestinal system.

Apparently there is no common sense reason why people should think they need a six months supply the product.

If you were expecting some kind of shortage of supplies, wouldn't food be first on your list?

Little Jimmy can take a bath if he needs to, but you can't feed the family a roll of toilet paper and expect them to be satisfied.

The weird thing is, no one can seem to pinpoint where the sudden need for toilet paper started.

Several years ago, the Coca-Cola company announced it had changed the formula in its wildly popular soft drink. Called the 'new Coke,' the flavour wasn't all that different. However, there was a massive outcry from dedicated Coke drinkers who demanded the old Coke back or they simply would stop buying the product all together.

The executives bowed to public demand and returned Coke to the original recipe ? than sat back and watched the profits roll in.

It has been suggested, that the switch to a new Coke was nothing more than a savvy marketing ploy. If you take away something people want, they will want it even more.

Even though the Coca-Cola company has never admitted to this, the situation has often been used to cite an example of how to increase your sales.

Maybe the toilet paper industry has come up with a clever way to increase sales of their product.

CEO Acme Paper Products Company: ?Our sales are consistent but flat-lined. It seems our customers simply use the same amount of our glorious product each month. We need more sales to satisfy our investors. You, yes, you with your hand up. What do you have to say??

?Yeah, it's me, Jenkins from the marketing department. It seems to me there is a new virus going around, and chances are it could spread globally. Maybe we could start a rumour that this virus will cause a toilet paper shortage. Think of the possibilities if the consumers are suddenly faced with the fear that our product, toilet paper, will be in short supply.?

?Well, Jenkins, there isn't a shortage, we have a warehouse full of toilet paper ready to be distributed.?

?Yes, sir, but THEY don't know that. If we can convince the public there will be a shortage, people will want our product even more than they need it.?

?Jenkins! You're a genius! Lets get the rumour mill going on Facebook!?

I'm just taking a guess at what's going on here, because there is no reason to suspect a virus outbreak should cause a shortage in this particular product ? it's never happened before.

I'm going to side with the guy in the store with the armful of beer.

Now that might just be a real national emergency.