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The gap is widening

EDITORIAL

IT OUGHT TO HAVE SURPRISED no one when Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced Tuesday that the Canada-U.S. border will remain closed for ordinary tourists for another month, until July 21.

After all, the reason for the closure was the COVID-19 pandemic, and recent trends have given cause for real concern about the potential northward move of the deadly coronavirus.

This week saw the number of U.S. deaths from the virus approach 120,000, with death rates rising in 18 of the 50 U.S. states, while in Canada the toll was a relatively modest 8,200, with 38 deaths between Monday and Tuesday. Statistics on the Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health website indicate there have been only a handful of new cases in Dufferin since late May.

And despite the lack of evidence suggesting a local community spread of the virus, masks or other face coverings are mandatory for anyone going into a store or other business.

Contrast that with the situation south of the border, where President Donald Trump is set to hold an indoor election rally in Tulsa, Oklahoma this Saturday. The venue seats 19,000, and while masks will apparently be made available, they won't be mandatory.

Oklahoma happens to be one of the 18 states where the COVID-19 death toll is rising, and while it had just 363 deaths among its 5 million residents, that compares with just 168 in British Columbia, which has a similar population.

Officials in Tulsa say the planned campaign rally ? Mr. Trump's first in over three months ? is likely to worsen an already troubling spike in coronavirus infections and could become a disastrous ?super spreader.? They pleaded with the Trump campaign to cancel the event or at least move it outdoors.

?It's the perfect storm of potential over-the-top disease transmission,? said Bruce Dart, the executive director of the Tulsa health department. ?It's a perfect storm that we can't afford to have.?

Perhaps the one bright note in the U.S. this week was the surprise ruling by the normally ultra-conservative U.S. Supreme Court, which rejected the Trump administration's contention that a law passed by Congress in the 1960s, which prohibited employers from discriminating on the basis of ?sex? did not apply to homosexuals and trans-genders.

The surprise came from the fact that the majority reasons were written by Justice Neil Gorsuch, a Trump appointee, and supported by Chief Justice John Roberts as well as the court's four liberal judges.

Apart from COVID-19, something else that's being shared on both sides of the border is the conduct being exhibited by some police officers when dealing with visible minorities.

Thankfully, we've seen nothing north of the border approaching the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis by a police officer, who placed a knee on his neck for nearly nine minutes, ignoring pleas that he couldn't breathe. However, there have been at least two recent deaths of indigenous Canadians in New Brunswick at the hands of RCMP officers and we hear regularly of complaints of police brutality elsewhere in Canada.

Thus far, the situation here is not nearly as bad as it is in the U.S., where a regular theme on the cable news networks portrays it as ?America in crisis.?