



We are in this Together

# LEADERSHIP IN A CRISIS

by Jaason Geerts, PhD, LEADS Canada



Understand that it is a **VUCA** situation (**V**olatile, **U**ncertain, **C**omplex, **A**mbiguous), which influences all other steps. General John Galvin, former Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, once said: “You will never have all the information that you would like to have. It is your job to gather enough information together and then to make a decision”.



Identify **PRIORITIES**, in sequence, and make and communicate **CLEAR DECISIONS** based on the best available information, including from experts.



Determine the best **STRATEGY**, based on stakeholder input, which includes experts and those tasked with executing the strategy. The strategy should clearly identify first and next steps, knowing that things can change suddenly, which requires adaptive leadership. Two relevant military terms are: “prior preparation and planning prevent poor performance” and “simplicity, flexibility, and concurrent activity”.



**COMMUNICATE** often and be **TRANSPARENT** and **AUTHENTIC** about:

- the nature of VUCA, including being unsure about future details
- the most recent reliable information (to filter through all the “noise” and rumours)
- the operational priorities
- the strategy, which is evolving

Instill **CONFIDENCE** in:

- a. the reliable information
- b. the strategy, despite expected setbacks
- c. the team and its members, and
- d. the end goal - we will get through this together



Provide clear **DELEGATION** of, and identify **LEADS**, for key tasks.



**ENABLE** people to act without unnecessary restrictions and **TRUST** them to make decisions, in line with the priorities, reliable information, and strategy.



Show **EMPATHY** and **CARE** for others, which involves **VISITING** (in-person or virtually), checking in, **VALUING** their work, and keeping **MORALE** up.



Ensure that there is a viable **PACE** except in short bursts, and **R&R** – prolonged high tension without a break is not sustainable. This includes rest breaks, time to switch off, schedule shifting, nutrition, humour, stress counseling, and non-work needs of staff (such as time to connect with their families). This also involves leader **SELF-CARE**.



*“In times of struggle, leaders must lift their inner and outer spirits and find **HOPE**.”*

Elder Little Brown Bear, Ernest W. Matton

*Contributors: Elder Little Brown Bear (Director of Aboriginal Services, Michael Garron Hospital), Brigadier (ret'd) Greville Bibby, OBE, Dr. Michael Gardam, (Chief of Staff, Humber River Hospital, CHE), Dr. Gillian Kernaghan (President and CEO, St. Joseph's, London), Dr. Erwin Loh (National Chief Medical Officer, Australia), Colonel S.M. Plourde (Chief of Staff, Canadian Forces Health Services Group, CHE), Dr. Anita Sugavanam (Consultant, Brighton & Sussex University NHS trust), General (ret'd) Peter Williams, OBE*