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BROCK'S BANTER: Ctrl-Alt-Facts

By Brock Weir

When local figures in the sports and athletics community launched their efforts to put Aurora on the road to becoming Canada's most active community by 2020 just a couple of years ago, they often waxed sentimental.
They longed for the days when kids were encouraged to climb trees ? and take a scraped knee or two like a champ ? without helicopter parents hovering nearby.
They spoke longingly for the years, which really don't seem all that long ago, when kids could grab a group of their neighbours or classmates, a ball, and a net and get into an all-day session of street hockey.
They wanted kids to get out in the great outdoors by turning off their devices and tuning into the world around them.
It's an ideal, and one I didn't realise I longed for until it was put right under my nose.
Had they not underscored the fact this simply doesn't happen as much compared to when I was growing or when my parents were growing up, I might not have noticed. But, it made me more aware.
In fact, it made me so aware that just last year, while tackling a treadmill at a local gym facing out the window looking west, I smiled in spite of myself at a group of kids devising a seemingly complex game in the adjacent parkette out of little more than a garbage can and a park bench, with nary a phone in sight.
That was just this past summer, and I was facing in the same direction this past Saturday night, this time with my neck craned upward from that infernal machine, my eyes darting between two TV screens suspended from the ceiling like a spectator in some sort of demented, absurd tennis game.
The TV immediately to my left featured CNN and its bank of talking heads discussing and debating the significance of the newly minted U.S. President's activities on the first full day of public office.
The one to the right showed CP24, which had broken away from coverage of the heartening scenes of Women's Marches around the world, including Toronto, to show the first press briefing of the new White House order.
It was a sight to behold as the new Press Secretary berated the press for its accurate reporting of the less than overwhelming crowds who turned out to see the inauguration of #45, compared to shots taken at #44's first inauguration at the exact same time from nearly the exact same vantage point.
Despite the clear evidence to underscore the truth, the Press Secretary insisted it was the largest crowd ever to witness an inauguration.
Almost as if he didn't believe the untruths he had to read out from his prepared statement, he emphasized the effort to which he was trying to sell this hogwash by ending his sentence with a forceful ?PERIOD? punctuated by a verbal exclamation mark rather than a full stop.
This was not carried live by CNN, rather clips were shown a few minutes allowing, allowing them to get their ducks in a row to puncture further holes in the very leaky boat the Oval Office sent out in a vain attempt to rescue its bluster.
Not content with the ?PERIOD!? the next morning, Kellyanne Conway went on TV to defend the statement, telling journalists and the public at large that these were simply ?alternative facts.?
In addition to the days were parents were content to let their kids climb trees, scrape their knees, and get a good game of shinny going, I now long for the days when ?alternative facts? were called what they are: outright ?lies.? (I also long for the days when people identifying as ?alt-right?, or called the same as others, were once again ?neo-Nazis? and ?white nationalists/supremacists? but that is a column for another day).
Now, I'm not one to want to stifle any sort of creativity and, I mean, embracing the retooling of outright lies to be ?alternative facts? more appealing to the fragile worldview of your base, is fertile creative ground, but a line must be drawn somewhere.
Nevertheless, let's explore this concept a bit further.
Don't be too smug. Aurora is no stranger to ?alternative facts? and we have seen them presented from all angles from all sides on any variety of topics ranging from the formation, composition, and, in some cases, exoduses of all varieties of festivals, as well as the myriad municipally-involved (or municipally-inspired) lawsuits that were, until very recently, a true hallmark of Aurora.
Still, what a world we would be living in if Town Hall launched a marketing campaign to its citizens claiming that despite all evidence to the contrary, historic Yonge Street is still a bustling hub of activity?it's just the demand for the empty storefronts is just so ?yuge? that landlords simply can't pick which A-list retailer they will allow to grace their space.
Or, that chicanes were just so successful in the northeast quadrant of Yonge and Wellington that they were actually taken out to

teach under-appreciative neighbours a lesson.
Or, that reducing Yonge Street to one lane in each direction fizzled because it would have been such a boon to Yonge Street shops that they simply couldn't handle the increase in foot traffic.
Or, one-way streets in the Downtown Core would significantly improve traffic flow.
Or, that internal polls showed that northwest residents actually adore the King cell tower looming over their properties as the lattice work reminds them of eating in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower.
Or, that back in 2010 Mayor Dawe's message of ?Put the Aura Back in Aurora? was almost as successful as ?Make America Great Again? in making voter turnout skyrocket to bring about change.
Or, that the Municipal portion of your tax bill didn't actually go up by 3.1 per cent, rather a low, low 2.1 per cent plus a further one per cent to boost municipal reserves.
Or, that despite countless residents living and working in the area saying the contrary, numbers show there is actually no parking problem in the downtown core.
Okay, so some people actually tried to make the last two happen, but it didn't ? and doesn't ? fly.
As this saga continues to unfold south of our border, I was initially concerned that this profession would be rendered obsolete as so many people gravitate towards sources (and I use the term loosely) tailored specifically towards their own worldview, their ?alternative facts?, branding everything else that might challenge said worldview or prompt them (egads!) to be critical thinkers as ?fake news,? but Saturday's Women's Marches and outright outrage stemming from the White House trying to make ?alternative facts? a thing has given me hope that there is an appetite out there to be served the truth.
News outlets serving Aurora might seem, in the grand scheme of things, to be a smaller fish in a larger media pond, but I for one am firm in my resolve to stand up in the face of ?alternative facts.?
If we all do so, every little bit will help defend the democracy on all levels we hold so dear.