This page was exported from - The Auroran
Export date: Thu Mar 28 18:52:53 2024 / +0000 GMT

BROCK'S BANTER: Lost in the Weed

By Brock Weir

?Time travel? was always my stock answer ? and it still is, the mystery and excitement as fresh today, in my mind, as it has ever been.

The question is usually: ?If you could have any superpower, what would it be??

Time travel, at least to my peers growing up, never seemed as glamourous as it did to me. Many were raised on comic books and morning cartoons, so the possibility of flying through the atmosphere at supersonic speed by donning a cape, or being able to perform superhuman feats of strength without needing the softest snap of a finger were just too enticing as far as options went.

Of course, this all changed once hormones started to race and many of the aspiring Clark Kents and Bruce Banners in my circle decided they would give it all up for x-ray vision. Feeling their oats was something of an understatement, but I digress.

I guess I was a different breed altogether. While being able to fly, perform adrenaline-defying acts or see through whatever one needed to see through were equally intriguing ? and I certainly wouldn't have turned any of these options down ? there was nothing more thrilling to me than the idea of picking any point in history as a destination

If you're scoffing at the idea, consider this: Would you really turn up your nose at the chance to zip back to the Middle East two or three millennia ago to get to the bottom of this whole Bible business? How about the opportunity to go back to Tudor England and see just what was so bewitching about Anne Boleyn? Or the opportunity to see how things unfolded on the Plains of Abraham in 18th century Quebec. Or 19th century Ontario to trail Laura Secord on her journey. Or the second half of the same century in Austria to give Klara and Alois Hitler a Planned Parenthood pamphlet. Or the ?Roaring Twenties? when prohibition in the United States and some Provinces here at home served to not only make alcohol consumption more exciting, but proved to be a boon to distillers here in Canada and, presumably, bathtub manufacturers on both sides of the border.

On this last front, I do have some experience.

As a late September baby, I had the ignominious honour of beginning university in Ottawa at the briefly-tender age of seventeen. For first-year students at Carleton University, especially during frosh week, it was a rite of passage to head over the river to a bar in Quebec to take advantage of the Province's drinking age, which is 18 as opposed to Ontario's 19.

Except for me.

By the time I hit the age of 18, frosh was already a fortnight in the rear-view mirror, so I had some catching up to do, but nonetheless I briefly had the experience of knowing what it was like living in a ?dry? environment when others around me were apparently living the high life; a 20 minute trip off campus and out of province be damned.

Everything old, however, seems to be on the way to becoming new again.

This month, municipalities across Ontario will have to decide whether to opt-in or opt-out of allowing retail cannabis sales inside their municipal limits. The City of Toronto has already had a head-start in opting into the plan, while some lower-tier municipalities, including the City of Markham, exercised their choice to opt out.

?We still have a lot of unanswered questions about community safety, about the impact to families and children,? said Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti in a statement. ?This vote by Markham Council reflects the concerns we have heard throughout the community. We have taken this position with the previous government and we applaud the Provincial Government for giving municipalities the right to opt out.?

December's vote was Markham's second in relation to the legalization of cannabis across the country following an October decision to prohibit the smoking and vaping of cannabis in public places within the city.

While I think the latter option was sensible and in keeping with similar measures pertaining to other controlled substances, I'm less confident about the decision to opt out all together.

I was not exactly beating the drum of support when Premier Ford announced in the early days of his mandate that Ontario would forego the model proposed by the previous Liberal government whereby cannabis in its various forms could be sold in specific retail outlets similar to the ubiquitous LCBOs ? the Ontario Cannabis Store (OCS).

Don't get me wrong: the OCS model as proposed by the previous government was in no way foolproof; the LCBOs of today are far from perfect, but, at the very least, it has become a tried and nearly-true method of selling a controlled substance.

The retail route, on the other hand, raised questions with me as well, from how the product would be handled by the individual seller, safety measures prescribed to keep the product out of the hands of those underage, and how government monitoring would be continued after licenses had been granted.

Some of those questions still need to be fully answered but opting out, in my opinion, could have unintended consequences in the not-too-distant future, including painting the Town into a corner.

Whether we like it or not ? and there seems to be a fairly even split on the matter ? the fact remains that cannabis is now legal in Canada, and it is not going away. You can grow some plants on your own. If you are over the age of 19 and have a credit card, you can buy cannabis buds, pre-rolled joints, oils and more with just a few clicks and have it delivered right to your door or nearest postal outlet. It is already in the community, so why not take advantage of it, help shape the impact it will have here at home, and reap the financial benefits?

Opting in has the potential to provide opportunities for retailers and entrepreneurs while creating jobs in the process. Opting in also has the potential to bring in business from elsewhere, attracting customers from other communities that have opted-out. It also has the potential to bring increased tax revenue into the municipality to support social services and programs.

Opting out, on the other hand, excludes the community from any such tax revenue schemes set up by upper tier governments, blocks retailers from competing fairly with their counterparts in other municipalities, drives potential business within our town limits elsewhere, and simply ignores a reality.

After all, there don't seem to be any plans to put in place planning blocks on future LCBOs and convenience stores simply because they respectively sell alcohol and tobacco. Maybe that comes next.