

## BROCK'S BANTER: Baby, It's Warm Outside

By Brock Weir

My relatively recent foray back into social media after several years in self-imposed exile has been an enlightening experience. It has been nice to connect with old friends, see what they have been up to over the last few years, and learn a few things in the process. The lead-up to October's Federal Election ? and the aftermath thereof ? also provided a great opportunity to weed out people who had, unbeknownst to me, become radicalized by their own idiocy in the intervening years.

Recently, I thought the improbable rise of a certain presidential candidate south of the border would offer the same opportunity. However, I am pleased to report that my post-election cull was effective in weeding out, to borrow a phrase from the man in question when discussing Rosie O'Donnell, the losers.

A more effective barometer has been reaction to the Syrian refugee crisis.

Reasoned debate, regardless of your views, are always welcome, but reason is the operative word and, apparently, a scarce commodity in some quarters.

Witness the wonder ? and, in some cases, puzzled wonder ? that greeted American coverage of the Prime Minister, Premier, and a host of other dignitaries welcoming those seeking a better life last week.

After my own amusement of their coverage ? and responses to it ? subsided, it saddened me there are places in the world where this welcome, this gesture of humanity, would raise an eyebrow.

Perhaps selfishly I pushed these thoughts out of my mind and just enjoyed the moment.

It was a heartwarming moment, and gratifying that this is once again the image Canada is projecting to the world. We can only be better and stronger for it, and I look forward in the New Year to meeting the newcomers various Aurora groups and organizations are working hard to welcome.

It was a welcome chance to become enveloped in a sense of holiday warmth.

I don't know about you, but the fact that winter seems to be waylaid somewhere has put a significant damper on my festive cheer. (And yes, I am aware the winter solstice isn't due to arrive until Monday, but we all know this is typically preceded by a hell of a long line of icy opening acts).

Christmas is just around the corner, but without that tell-tale feeling of snow underfoot, or that delightful feeling of the inside of one's nose freezing ever-so-slightly when going out the door first thing in the morning, or steam coming off your freshly shampooed and showered scalped as you head off to work, makes the festive season seem like eons away.

But it is not due to lack of effort.

Usually, Aurora's annual Tree Lighting Ceremony is enough to light that festive spark within me, and this year's came awfully close. Case in point, 10-year-old Rachel who impressed both me and Mrs. Claus with her one wish for Christmas: that her family be all together to celebrate the day. It was remarkable, and something we don't often hear from a girl or boy of her years, and it was more heartwarming than the copious amounts of hot chocolate this writer consumed to keep up with the night's festivities.

This was tempered, however, a short time later, with Mrs. Claus fielding another request from another little girl, this time requiring the girl making the request to explain to the Big Guy's wife the ins-and-outs of the best kind of iPad to find under the tree on Christmas morning?and the oh-so-important difference between an iPad and an iPod.

Yep, we were brought back down to earth, sure in the knowledge that, yes, it was still 2015.

I am hopeful, however, there is still time for Jack Frost to get his act together, come back from Paris where he has been undoubtedly pushing his own agenda at the landmark Climate Change talks, and start doing his best in giving us his worst.

Evidently, this principle of the Christmas Spirit being contingent on the weather does not apply to my mother.

Usually a woman who pooh-poohs Christmas as a rule, she declared on Saturday morning this year she was going in for a ?small tree. One that can just sit on top of a bench.? What she came home with from the Aurora Farmers' Market that afternoon was a tree that was quite literally too tall to fit in the living room itself much less atop a bench.

Christmas? I'm soaking in it.

### SOMEONE'S SET TO GET THEIR CHRISTMAS WISH

I don't have anything in particular topping my Christmas list this year, but that is not the case for several people who have their eyes on municipal politics.

This past Saturday, Council met for a closed session meeting. With the budget wrapped up last Tuesday, Saturday's meeting wasn't for what has been, in my time covering Town Hall, essentially the only reason to get lawmakers around the table on a Saturday, but a rather more unusual circumstance: hiring the Town's new Chief Administration Officer (CAO).

The recommendation before Council was to appoint the successful applicant to the position which, as the name suggests, oversees the whole operation of the Municipality and employees within it (in short, outside of the Mayor, the municipality's top job).

At press time, it is unclear just who this new CAO will be as the name of the hire will only be disclosed once the necessary employment agreement is fully executed.

Nevertheless, I am very curious to see who this person will be and how he or she will leave their own stamp on the position.

Since the resignation of former CAO Neil Garbe to take a similar position with the Town of Richmond Hill, it has been fascinating to watch how operations at Town Hall have evolved while being overseen with a pair of fresh eyes.

Under the leadership of interim CAO Patrick Moyle, significant subtle changes have been noticed. There is a bit more openness on how things are done ? not that there wasn't openness before, so please spare me your letters ? at the Municipal level, having the decisions of Mayor and Council carried out, the decisions made on behalf of the residents who elected them to represent their interests, no longer seem to be the herculean tasks they once were and, lo and behold, the 2016 Budget has been delivered with a relatively reasonable tax increase, before the end of the year, and nobody emerging bruised and bloodied in the process.

These changes might be small, but as someone who has been an onlooker in the press box for nearly six years, trust me when I say it has been a brave new world.

For someone who has been in Aurora for such a short period of time, Mr. Moyle leaves unusually big shoes to fill. I hope his successor is up to the task, and wish them the best of luck in doing so.