

BROCK'S BANTER: Buffering... Buffering...

By Brock Weir

On Thursday night, local Progressive Conservatives gathered at Aw, Shucks' Pearl Room, the popular restaurant's reception facility, to acclaim Richmond Hill businessman Michael Parsa as the Ontario PC candidate for Aurora's south riding, Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill.

Attendance was healthy, but with speeches set to begin nearly an hour after the slated start time, there was plenty of time for conversation.

We're in the throes of fall so, of course, by the time 6 p.m. rolled around, darkness had already descended. Standing near the bank of second floor windows looking across and down onto the east side of Yonge Street in Aurora's Downtown Core, the darkness was pricked by the light emanating from bustling storefronts.

Yes, bustling storefronts in Aurora's Downtown Core.

I know, I could hardly believe it myself.

But, of course, not all store fronts were illuminated with customers beating down their doors just to avail themselves of their products and services. Plenty of them were dark, closed up after a full day of business, or shuttered and festooned with 'For Sale?' and 'For Rent?' signs after being opened in anticipation of business that never came.

Furniture and home décor stores on the east side of the street seem to be a thing of the past. Flashy fashion stores flogging designer togs to the suburban crowds have gone the way of shoulder pads and parachute pants. And art stores? Well, just about everyone is a critic until you get just south of the old Post Office.

There was one common denominator among the store fronts that had regular traffic coming in and out of their stores: they were the barbershops, hair and beauty salons, and nail joints.

While the other establishments slept soundly waiting for another day, or a new tenant to breathe new life into their 100-odd-year-old walls, these were veritable hives of activity, particularly with teens going in and out, chatting on the window-front couches and waiting for their turns in the chair (and yes, I was surprised as you are to see, from the other side of the street, actual conversations appearing to unfold with just two or three pairs of thumbs pressed up against smart phones. God, I sound like an old ' and pardon me, Elizabeth May, fart.)

So, as politicians, community activists, and armchair pundits continually ponder the apparent slow death of our main drag, diagnosing various symptoms and prescribing no end of cure, there seems to be at least one industry that is working the area to their advantage.

Yet we seem to be in an unending cycle of what to actually do in this area for companies conducting business with nary a tube of gel on hand.

Newmarket is continually lauded for the redevelopment of its Main Street, a thoroughfare which got a high profile fanfare last week with yet another laurel to rest upon. But Aurora seems to be stuck in a holding pattern. All the elements are there, the dry ingredients are mixed off and set to one side and the wet is thoroughly blended, but nobody seems to have the guts to combine them.

I chuckled to myself at this situation over the weekend while watching Saturday Night Live.

The show, which is always on-point during the election season ' or, in this case, the aftermath of what the electorate hath wrought ' had a particularly biting sketch involving the regular weeknight show hosted by Anderson Cooper. It was a typical setup, with the host standing in between two banks of pundits, surrogates and talking heads, all with varying degrees of experience and political leanings.

The talking heads were convened to discuss the 'breaking news' of Trump trying to obtain security clearance for his family.

'This is not normal!' exclaimed one.

'This is crazy!' said another.

'This is where we, as the media, have to draw the line,' said the third.

'This is not like when Trump called women fat,' said the fourth. 'That was like, 'Fine, whatever, who cares?' But this is different!'

'We cannot let him off the hook this time,' the fifth.

'Can we not remember most Americans voted for Trump,' ventures the sixth.

'Actually, they didn't!' countered one of the ones who had interjected earlier in the exchange.

At this, they all laughed, just in time for another 'Breaking News' alert, the next being the KKK's planned parade celebrating the win of the President-Elect. With this new tidbit, the talking heads cycled through the above script almost verbatim with the dialogue

of Talking Head #4 switched up to reflect the the most up-to-date controversy.

Following the laugh, another alert: 'Trump may force all Muslims to register in the United States.' Another cycle, another laugh, another alert: this time on the appointment of Steve Bannon into the White House.

Another cycle but just before the laugh, a realization from the host: 'I just had this weird memory like we keep doing the same ?? Freeze. Time for him to be reprogramed. And Cooper was flipped out for a newly activated Jake Tapper.

Lather again, rinse, repeat.

This week could bring a final decision on whether or not to actually bite the bullet and once again try left hand turn restrictions at Yonge and Wellington, just north of Aurora's new apparent new beauty corridor. If last week's discussion was any indication, we will have to wait until the tried and true cycle of 'There hasn't been enough public consultation!' and 'What about the infiltration?' to play itself out before a decision is rendered. That is, if a decision is rendered at all.

Next Thursday, December 1, Councillors Tom Mrakas and Michael Thompson are teaming up to host a roundtable discussion at Town Hall entitled 'Library Square: From Concept to Reality' to hear from 'you, the residents and business owners of Aurora, on the next steps towards realizing the future of Library Square.'

At this stage in the game, it seems the 'next steps' have been the same 'next steps' that have been on the table for nearly 20 years. The only factors that seem to change are the players and the vision for the end product rather than the 'next step.'

The 'next steps' always sound good on paper, but when it inches closer to reality and it becomes clear upon realizing the 'next steps' might actually require a change of some sort, the powers that be 'lawmakers and electors alike' shy away, with a call for more consultation and more input to stave off something with precedent everywhere else but Aurora in case there is any negative impact.

Like the android Anderson Cooper at the end of the SNL sketch, it seems that Aurora is in a constant state of buffering while the world continues to whirl spin around us.

It's time to unplug the modem, wait a few seconds and plug it back in to move forward.