

BROCK'S BANTER: Nobody promised you a rose garden

By Brock Weir

At the end of last month, I wrote the following in this space:

?Around this time of year, I usually start looking forward to the dog days of summer, a time when my personal work schedule becomes a little bit more relaxed and there is a bit of breathing room between issues that crop up, events that need to be covered, and when people doing all the weird and wonderful things Aurorans have become known for make themselves known, one way or another.?

That passage was inspired by the precise moment in the early days of summer when it was clear that brief, expected, and typically annual respite was about to go rapidly downhill. Liberal leader Justin Trudeau had just arrived in Aurora, making a clean sweep of our downtown core, seeming to energize local party faithful and those who may have been straddling the fence ? or at least rendering them somewhat awed by a bit of stardust.

The Federal Election season was upon us and it was clear there would be no rest going forward.

To a degree, I was right. Over the last few weeks, we have seen announcement after announcement of our Federal representatives criss-crossing the country, all of a sudden seeming to find the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow after a bit of austerity here and there with enough money to throw around to help long-gestating projects, aid aging legislation that has languished on the backburner until almost congealed, and perhaps a few more resources to ensure their candidates are visible at every opportunity afforded them. There have also been some surprises, particularly last week when Prime Minister Stephen Harper visited Regina. Due the following day to make some sort of announcement in the provincial capital with Saskatchewan's Premier, media ? social and otherwise ? were all abuzz Mr. Harper would lend his voice to the calls of Premier Wall calling for the outright abolition of the Senate, a body used by the Prime Minister to his advantage until it ultimately turned out to be his Achilles' heel.

Pundits pondered the constitutional implications of such a move, whether the PM would dare opening up the Constitution considering how successful previous attempts have been, and whether or not this was just a distraction from experts weighing in on Canada being on the cusp of another economic downturn.

By the time the appointed hour arrived the following day, the announcement came with little more than a whimper. Cast aside was the outright abolition of Canada's supposed ?Chamber of Sober Second Thought? only to be replaced with a Death by 1,000 Cuts. The Death by 1,000 Cuts concept is not a new one. The first three were inflicted by the Prime Minister himself when he appointed some of his tarnished stars, with the lacerations being added steadily and exponentially as the scandal they wrought wore on. Since then, the Prime Minister has not appointed any members to the Senate and there are now over 20 vacancies to be filled. Under his apparently revolutionary policy, his stance?will remain status quo: letting the upper chamber wither on the vine until the Provinces can get their acts together and come up with a unanimous plan for reform.

It is an interesting strategy considering this cunning plan hasn't really borne itself out over the past two years, but it has opened the door to welcome dialogue on the Canadian constitution, as well as legal challenges to see whether the Prime Minister's interesting approach to his constitutional duties are, at the core, constitutional in and of themselves.

This will provide significant fodder over the next few weeks as we wait for him to cross the street in Ottawa to ask the Governor General to call the election.

As our Federal representatives ? and those looking to replace them ? have hit the unofficial campaign trail running, our municipal representatives have not let the grass grow under their feet either ? although Council, in its infinite wisdom, cancelled this week's Council meeting slated for July 28 on the theory there simply wasn't enough business to attend to in order to make the meeting practical.

This, despite the annual tradition of nixing these extra meetings set out to address the Town's business, followed by complaints from Council members in August through to the end of September bemoaning agendas groaning with a backlog of business which should have been attended to, resulting in meetings often stretching past midnight in an effort to clear off the table, and annual calls not to make the same mistake again next year.

Lather. Rinse. Repeat. And schedule a Special Council meeting for the same, cancelled evening for good measure to address items that have since cropped up on the horizon.

In the meantime, Council has much work to consider in the weeks ahead. The news Council settled its ongoing dispute with Minto Communities over the six acre parcel of land on Mavrinac Boulevard was welcome on several fronts, not only from a precedent-setting policy perspective, but also a particular relief to the dozens of neighbours who had been worried about its fate for

the past two years.

Now that the land will soon be in municipal hands, however, the real debate will soon begin.

When Council made its move to legally secure the land, they did so with the proviso that it be used for "municipal purposes", a catch-all term that can be applied to just about anything. The fun will now be going out to the public and seeking ideas on just how this land should be transformed in the years ahead because, let's face it, as it stands now it's certainly no rose garden. And the last thing this Council has promised those 2B neighbours is a rose garden.

There will undoubtedly be a few pages-worth of suggestions and pitches made to local lawmakers on different visions for this area. Some will hold water, some will not, but they will all be given due consideration. Suggestions will end up compiled into a report, they will be cross-referenced with needs identified in Aurora's new Parks and Recreation Master Plan, which is currently being developed, and ultimately "eventually" a decision will be made.

But, first thing's first. Mavrinac is not the only important decision Council needs to make that has the potential to have widespread, rippling effects across the community. As suggestions are being considered for Mavrinac, it is important to use those intervening months to once and for all make a final decision on Library Square. One decision on use just might inform the other. And, if the Library Square decision is hammered out, hopefully the Mavrinac neighbours won't have to sit on the edge of their collective seat for over 13 years "unlike their counterparts in Downtown Aurora" to find out what's going to be put in on the other side of their fences.