

BROCK'S BANTER: Ready for the Real World?

By Brock Weir

With the clock counting down to Labour Day weekend, it's safe to say that summer is rapidly coming to a close.

Around this time of year, people start to reflect on the memories made over the course of the season, or perhaps even opportunities that have been lost, not realising the season itself was passing so quickly ? all the while trying to get yourself back in the zone for work, school, or what is otherwise (and often snidely) referred to as getting ?back to the real world.?

With my vacation essentially out of the way, my mind is more or less there already. And, to the fall ahead, I say ?bring it on?, and bring on the sweater weather.

I'm not a fan of sticky, muggy summer days. Hovering between 21 and 24 degrees is more than sufficient in my book, so I'm quite looking forward to an end to the humidity...and yet, there is something missing in the air.

It might be the lack of the traditional Staples commercials of mom and pop prancing up and down the aisles to the tune of ?It's The Most Wonderful Time of the Year? with their brats following mournfully behind. Maybe it is the lack of heat warnings (this past Tuesday excepted), smog advisories and water bans which are otherwise the hallmarks of our Southern Ontario summers that are conspiring to throw off the typical feelings.

On the other hand, maybe it is the turmoil that is plaguing the world outside the comfy confines of our own country that has taken some of the joy and fun out of the season of the sun, being forced ? and beneficially so ? to take stock of the world around us beyond the summer cocoon.

But, come this Tuesday, it will be back to business as usual. Cottage activities will start to wind down ahead of a season closer, local business productivity will shoot up, and shops and restaurants surrounding our local schools will once again be in clover.

For some of us not lucky enough to be able to escape for a week or two at the time to relax in a cottage, sit on a beach, or jet off to any exotic locale around the world, there are a few constants year-round Aurorans can look forward to as the rest of the Town becomes sleepy in the summer haze.

We have our traditional annual grouching about certain music festivals in Aurora, lack thereof, how that lack thereof came to be and where we should collectively point our fingers. We have our traditional annual debates over whether the Town of Aurora should have a proper snow disposal facility, a debate to which I can only assume is some sort of strange experiment in psychological air conditioning for the masses. We have our annual moaning about what should, shouldn't, can and can't be done in Aurora while so many residents are off into parts unknown. But, on the flipside, we have our traditional summer of philanthropy with astronomical numbers of kind-hearted, generous and selfless Aurorans dreaming up new and traditional ways to help others, whether they geared up for walk-a-, run-a-, or marathons to raise money to combat illness, poverty, or other social ills, or taking part in the incredible cultural phenomenon that has become the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge.

BUT LET ME PICK SOMETHING OUT OF THE ?MOAN? PILE

The end of summer is also the time of year when mundane paper pushing, voting and squabbles ? colloquially referred to as ?the business of the Town? starts moving forward once again (speed to be determined) for what is hoped to be the betterment of every man, woman and child in the Town of Aurora.

Not so this year. There is a pesky election in the way with local lawmakers starting to become a bit gun-shy in making decisions one way or another all in the name of it being ?too close to an election? or ostensibly ? and selflessly, presumably ? not wanting to burden incoming Council with big-ticket and big-idea items so close to the inaugural.

With some projects circling Council table for years before they even come close to coming in for a landing, it can be frustrating for those people standing on the sidelines, whether they have a vested interest in a particular decision or not, to be kept waiting on tenterhooks for what seems like an eternity.

This was underscored at this month's Council meeting by Mayor Dawe in the recent debate over the \$26 million Joint Operations Centre, now approved to be constructed at the top of Industrial Parkway North. Speaking to suggestions from some Council members that it was too big an item to approve so close to an election, he said, ?I am constantly confused by this concept that we are too close to an election that we can't make a decision. At what point do we actually cut it off? Is it a year? Six months? Or is it three months? We're here to do a job. We're paid to do a job and, in my opinion, that is what we're doing.?

BUT IS IT?

One can understand such big decisions close to a time when voters are going to be extra-vigilant in keeping tabs on how their elected representatives vote, and checking off whether or not they actually represent their individual interests at the table, can make some people on all sides a little bit uncomfortable. I do, however, agree with the Mayor's point that Council members are paid to do a job. That being said, I won't go as far as to say the Mayor nailed it on the head.

The Joint Operations Centre was not the only item on this month's agenda that underscored this issue. A variety of items discussed looped into the idea that (a) due to many people being away over the summer, and (b) Council only meets once or twice a month and there aren't as many opportunities for members of the public to come forward to have their say at a General Committee meeting. Several items were deferred to the September Council meeting, the last one currently on the books ahead of the October 27 election, due to a lack of time, as was the case at the July 29 Council meeting, and the July 15 meeting prior to that.

Perhaps the solution in making sure the business of the Town moves forward to everyone's satisfaction without things spilling over from meeting to meeting, or potentially excluding people from participating in the public process, is evaluating the summer schedule.

If not having General Committee meetings to give the public a fighting chance to participate in discourse, why not consider adding a meeting here and there over the summer months to nip the problem in the bud? To the best of my knowledge, neither the Mayor nor any of the eight Councillors still need their summer vacations to bring in the harvest, as was the case during the summer vacays of our forebears.

In future years, it might nibble into valuable cottaging time, but there might be a chance to have the business of the Town wrapped up in a neat bow in time for the 2018 election.