

BROCK'S BANTER: Support Your Local Sheriff!

By Brock Weir

It is amazing how far even a single night away from the daily grind, a change of scenery, or even sleeping in a different bed can go towards recharging one's batteries.

Even if you know that in just a few hours you will be coming back to exactly what you left behind, a break in routine and monotony is often just what the doctor ordered, or would have if you're the type to pay heed to such things.

At least, that was part of my game plan when I popped out of town on Saturday morning for a quick overnighter to upstate New York to see a show.

?Ah,? I thought, ?a few hours away from the election routine and all the strange phenomena that can go along with it.?

A day away from the sagas of Aurora's election signs, of over 40 candidates vying for just 13 potential job vacancies, and all the shenanigans that each entails. As I got closer to the U.S. Border, the knot in my back began to subside as with each passing kilometer election signs eventually became fewer and fewer until we were eventually over the Niagara River.

However, as much as I relished the feeling while cruising down the freeway, it was all for naught as soon as we hit our ultimate destination. Yes, it seems this guy right here, in the excitement that is Ontario's Municipal Election Crunch time, forgot all about the midterm elections of our neighbours to the south.

The closer I got back to civilization the more signs there were.

If you don't pay close attention to them, you run a significant chance of missing them. Instead of the cacophony of electoral colours that can be found today at just about any Aurora intersection, colours designed to catch the eye of passers-by and make you stand out from the crowd, the election signs of our American cousins combined to form a pretty uniform sea of red, white and blue.

In a two party system, of course, the balance of blue versus red on any given sign is a measure of which end of the political spectrum each candidate happens to be, but there is little deviation from the patriotic colour scheme, and no glamorous headshots.

?AND THEN AN INATE SENSE OF CANADIAN-NESS KICKS IN

Since registration for our Municipal Election closed on September 12, we have heard at just about every opportunity how a record 28 candidates running for Aurora Council makes it nearly impossible for the average voter to pick up to eight individuals that represent their interests. Or, depending on your approach to filling out the ballot, or if you're a glass-half-empty kind of guy, weeding out the ones who don't.

A practical solution to some is to have a ward system; that way, or so the argument goes, it will be easier to focus on the respective platforms of the two or three candidates looking to represent your one particular neighbourhood and, of course, give you enough time left over to also make informed decisions on each mayoral and trustee candidate.

It's a fair enough argument, and one that is difficult to dispute ? even for someone such as myself who remains mildly sceptical of any benefits that could come from splitting Aurora into any number of wards --- but after my overnight trip, I think we should count ourselves lucky.

We only have 28 Council candidates to occupy our thoughts. Spare a moment for our American cousins and all they have to keep in mind this November.

As I drove and later strolled by the Democratic and Republican campaign headquarters of the electoral district I happened to be in, there were people vying for Congress, County Legislator, State Assembly, Sheriff, and a seemingly disproportionate number of people running for Family Court Judge.

Perhaps it is my innate ?Canadian-ness? kicking in, but that portion of the election, to my mind, was inarguably overkill. It is important, of course, to be informed when you're looking to vote for your state assemblyperson and the man or woman you want to send to Washington, but is it really necessary to have people face off for the position of Sheriff, State/County Comptroller, Judge (in a wide-open field), or even as Family Court judge?

Granted, I was born and raised in a country where Governors General and provincial Lieutenant-Governors are appointed positions, judges are appointed to various levels of our judicial system ideally on the basis of qualification and merit, and Sheriffs are usually relegated to period westerns on the CBC, but I like our system.

Having elections for these respective positions would, in my opinion, defeat the purpose. Regardless of your opinion of the monarchy in Canada, our head of state is, in theory, expected to be apolitical. It would defeat the purpose if her representative in Canada was elected on a specific political mandate. The same can be said about candidates looking to be elected to the bench.

Would we really want people who are supposed to preside over the legal fates of countless citizens to be appointed for a narrow term limit, on a mandate, representing whichever the interests of whichever political party backed them, financially or otherwise? And how would one weed out the best possible candidate to fill the very important role of a Family Court Judge aside from whether they were Republican or Democrat? And would your chances in getting a decent divorce settlement or adequate custody of your son or daughter be impacted if you were known to be politically active on the wrong side?

In our respective post-Thanksgiving turkey stupors, we should be thankful we only have to think about representing the candidates who will be there to directly represent our interests around that Council table or in the school boardroom.

WHEN IT RAINS, IT POURS

In this election year, there seems to be an unprecedented amount of discussion (I'll leave it to you to fill in a more colourful word on my behalf) over election signs. Some people feel there are too many, others think there are too few, particularly after late-night (or brazen daylight) raids leave signs missing or pummelled in the ground. Some have dubbed them pollution, others have described them as the scourge of environmentalism, or even a distraction.

Personally, I don't subscribe to any one of these views. While sign placement anywhere else than on private property is a testament solely to the candidate's financial resources and manpower than his or her merits, they serve to spur vital discussion in our democracy, inspire people to make note of the names they have seen and, if we're lucky, make the move to find out more.

Signs in school areas? While there is always a problem of signs impacting visibility for students walking to and from school as well as drivers, of course, there is no better way to catch these future voters while they are young. One can only hope it plants at least a kernel of interest in the people and processes that have a direct impact of their lives, blossoming in time to inspire them to become a part of the process when they hit the age of majority.

CORRECTION

In last week's article "Proper resources key to a good education: trustee candidates?", it was said of working with students with special needs gave him "a perspective on kinds with "various exceptionalities." This should have read "a perspective on kids with "various exceptionalities."