

INSIDE AURORA: Depth Perception

By Scott Johnston

Although it should be one of the last things we think about as a long winter finally comes to an end, snow plowing, or lack thereof, was in the news earlier this month.

I'm not sure what has changed, but not that long ago, if you can believe it, the folks that plowed our streets could almost be described as over-zealous.

They would clear the snow so close to the curb that the shovels would often hit the concrete. In our neighbourhood, spring would reveal curbs with so many scrapes and gouges that they looked like a hungry tyrannosaur had been chewing on them.

I remember one winter there were even large chunks of sod torn up where a driver had driven well up over the curb.

Now that's enthusiasm.

But it appears those days have gone.

Maybe the Town was tired of repairing the curbs, or maybe money got tight, but now you're lucky if the snow is plowed as close as a metre from the curb. In fact, for more than a few snowfalls over the past two winters, I had to shovel well over a couple of metres past the end of our driveway to get to where the plows had cleared the street.

On the plus side, if the plows are clearing less of the road surface, this is saving us on tax dollars. Even better, by shovelling their ?extended driveways?, taxpayers, or at least, those with houses, are clearing large chunks of our streets for the Town for free.

Perhaps this is a taste of things to come, and soon we'll get to the stage where we're expected to shovel all of the roadways in front of our properties.

Laugh if you want, but it can be argued that if we're expected to maintain the grass on the Town-owned boulevards in front of our houses, then the same principle could be applied to the streets. That would really save some tax dollars. As an added benefit we'd all be a lot more fit ? and likely frostbit.

Another change in plowing practices in recent years, again perhaps due to expediency or those pesky tax dollars, is that the operators no longer clear the windrows at the end of our driveways.

It was nice in the ?old days? to only have to shovel your driveway once, and not a second time when the plow came by, usually late in the evening, dumping another knee high pile of the white stuff, which quickly froze to a granite-like consistency before you could take care of it.

But recent news coverage has focused on the depth of snow required to accumulate before plowing will commence. Now, apparently, we don't see plows on our side streets until over eight centimetres of snow has fallen.

Eight centimeters may not sound like a lot, but snow is slippery stuff, and not everyone in Town has winter tires. Combine that with some factors such as ice, hills, poor visibility, and pedestrians, and it makes for some tricky driving.

If the Town increases this eight centimetre limit any further, we may all have to start obtaining optional plow attachments for our cars.

Fortunately, with spring here and above zero temperatures the norm, the streets are now fully clear thanks to the warmth of the sun (another tax saving method of snow removal ? thank you, Mother Nature), so all of this discussion is moot, at least, until later this year.

That should give us all enough time to look into those car plow attachments.

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