

INSIDE AURORA: The Silence of Summer

By Scott Johnston

I was surprised to hear that 3,000 people attended the Town's recent screening of the final Tragically Hip concert.

My surprise didn't stem from a perception that this wasn't a Town partial to this band. It was more because I didn't think there were that many people left here this summer.

It seemed that ever since school let out, Aurora had been a ghost town. This was especially true on weekends, and even more so on long week-ends.

Perhaps there's more enjoyment in battling bumper to bumper traffic on the 400 on one's way to Muskoka to spend time with close friends and eight bazillion mosquitoes than the rest of us are privy to.

Or maybe the weekend GO train service was being even more effective than we imagined at whisking our shopping and entertainment dollars southwards to be spent well beyond our borders.

In any case, it has been quiet in Town, and for what I admit are entirely selfish reasons, that was great.

The traditional construction challenges aside, traffic was lighter. It was much easier to get around, and on occasion I've been able to get through the intersection of Yonge and Wellington without having to wait for more than one traffic light.

Better yet, I've never parked so close to the places I've wanted to go. Usually my spot is far enough away that my destination is not always visible over the curvature of the Earth.

Dining out has been a breeze. Reservations? Ha! Just walk in anywhere, anytime, and take a seat.

Retail space was also quieter. You'd step into a store and while the salespeople didn't physically have a coating of dust, and cobwebs connecting them to the counters and merchandise due to a lack of activity, they certainly seemed that way.

Another noticeable difference this summer has been that the traditionally long checkout lines have been shorter at everything from grocery stores to coffee places. That hasn't always increased the pace of service, but if more people are out of Town, I guess that should logically include not only customers, but a number of people behind the counter, too.

This couldn't have been good for business, but it sure made life easier for those of us left in Town.

As for entertainment, the Hip concert aside, it was great enjoying the Town's special events without pushing through hordes of people. While for the most part they have been well attended, such things as Shakespeare in the Park, Concerts in the Park, the Farmer's Market, Movies in the Park, Doors Open, Canada Day and Dance in the Park activities, were all relatively hoard-free.

This applies, as well, most recently to Ribfest, which made a rare summer appearance in August, rather than its traditional September run. It was a lot of fun.

The general quietness of Town was also made evident by the... well... quietness. With windows open more frequently to let in fresh air, one would expect the usual summer noises to waft in, too. They did, but there was a greater proportion of soothing bird song, and less grating human generated sounds.

Similarly, with the late night parties, and revving cars having moved northwards with the cottagers, it's made for more relaxing times outside on our patios and decks.

So, for those of you who traditionally head out of Town in July and August, I suggest that next summer you have a bit of a rethink in plans. There's lots to enjoy here, and it's even better with the extra elbow room.

But if you decide not to stay, thanks in advance.

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