

Next month's Tree Lighting just got more Christmassy

By Brock Weir

In just a couple of weeks, Santa Claus will see Aurora getting its Christmas finery out for the annual Santa Under the Stars Parade, but when he returns for an encore at the beginning of December for the Town's annual Tree Lighting Ceremony he'll feel even more at home.

Council last week decided to spruce up the ceremony with a slight name change. Out is the former 'Tree Lighting Ceremony' and in is the 'Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony.'

It's a small detail, to be sure, but one which was, according to Councillor Harold Kim, probably an 'oversight' due to be corrected. In his notice of motion, which was approved 7 ? 1, Councillor Kim said the centrepiece of the ceremony is 'well known to be a Christmas Tree' and the word 'Christmas' was not included in its original title back in 2005 for 'reasons unknown.'

Speaking in support of Councillor Kim's motion, Councillor Tom Mrakas agreed that it was time to call it what it is.

'At the ceremony, Santa Claus is there, Mrs. Claus is there, she's reading 'Twas the Night before Christmas, we have reindeer, the Salvation Army is there singing Christmas carols so, to me, it kind of sounds like Christmas,' he said. 'To me, you kind of call it like it is.'

Councillor Wendy Gaertner offered a similar view, adding that Council members are on stage singing Christmas carols as well.

'For me, it just continues the celebration of Christmas,' added Councillor Sandra Humfries. 'Usually the tree that is lit up at Christmastime is called a Christmas Tree and, for me, it is just a lovely clarification that it is a Christmas Tree and everyone is welcome to come and enjoy, with the inclusivity.'

Councillor Paul Pirri, on the other hand, had a differing opinion.

'I am going to be the stick in the mud on this issue,' he said. 'I just don't understand what the point is. We have had an event for the last 15 years and I just don't know why we're going through the process of changing the name that we have had for the past 15 years. It just seems a little bit beyond our role as Council, to deal with policy issues and procedural issues, to be going in and changing the name of events.'

'I think we're, to some extent, overstepping our boundary. We all know what it is, I just don't understand why we would go through the effort to change the name of something. We have other events; we have the Easter Egg Hunt, a myriad of other events, I just don't understand what the problem is, I don't understand what the point is, and I don't understand what we're fixing by doing this.'

'I am prepared to talk about how Christmas Trees were initially a pagan tradition, but I think everyone knows I like to deal with real, substantive issues and I don't think this is one of them.'

Councillor Kim, on the other hand, was prepared to defend his motion.

'I respect Councillor Pirri's perspective, and I respect most of his perspectives, but this one I don't necessarily agree with,' he said.

'I do agree that it is not regular for Council to change the name of any activity. However, this does kind of stick out in that ceremony started 12 years ago and, for some reason, Christmas was left out. Upon investigation, I am not sure why, but we do understand that possibly an omission was made, and it is such an obvious omission it would just seem proper to correct it and that is all this is. I am looking forward to the Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony.'

If you're looking forward to it as well, mark your calendars. It is set for Wednesday, December 6, from 6.30 ? 8.30 p.m. at Town Hall and the Aurora Seniors' Centre.