

Aurora has a ball raising the roof for Hillary House National Historic Site



By Brock Weir

For some people today, social interaction can be limited to a Tweet or the number of likes amassed on social media, but Friday night was a bit of a throwback for Aurora residents filling King Valley Golf Club to raise money for the Aurora Historical Society.

If there were any doubts the Hillary House Ball was looking just a little bit to the past in order to strengthen the future, it should be noted the above reference to social media came not from this writer, but from one of our most enduring examples of social media: Aurora's official Town Crier.

Town Crier John Webster opened the third annual Hillary House Ball underscoring the importance of community interaction.

‘It is a well-known fact that the fabric that held our pioneer communities together was the social interaction with one another,’ cried Mr. Webster. ‘Today’s social interactions have been boiled down to tweets, likes, pins and friends. Here in Aurora we still know and understand the importance of face to face interactions, and we know how to do it in style.’

For John McIntyre, president of the Aurora Historical Society, Friday’s ball was a first step on the road to new changes coming both to the Society and to Hillary House, which they own. Plans are still underway to preserve Aurora’s oral history, with high school students taking their cameras out to interview seniors living in Town of their lives and stories, but there are further plans afoot.

‘Next year, you may actually see tennis return to the grounds of Hillary House,’ said Mr. McIntyre in something of a teaser. ‘That is where the Aurora Tennis Club began over a century ago and we may have some surprises for you next year.’

If you can’t wait for next year’s surprises, you can still have a treat.

‘I hope you will come out to Hillary House during the Christmas season because it is particularly beautiful at Christmastime,’ he continued. ‘Saturday is the Santa Claus Parade and the best place to see it is from Hillary House ? and there is hot chocolate too!’

Mr. McIntyre didn’t have to sell Hillary House too hard to the dignitaries in attendance, which included Mayor Geoffrey Dawe, several Council members, Newmarket-Aurora MP Lois Brown and MPP Chris Ballard.

Ms. Brown said she was ‘delighted’ the Hillary House Ball has become an enduring tradition for the Aurora Historical Society and

had kudos for the direction Mr. McIntyre has taken the Society since he was appointed president for a second non-consecutive term last year.

Similar sentiments were expressed by Mr. Ballard.

"I tip my hat to the hard work [the Society] has done over the many, many years they have been in existence," he said. "I have said often that history is the fabric that holds our community together, and I don't think I am overstating it when it comes to Aurora and Hillary House."

With a captive audience, Mayor Dawe jokingly made a pitch to Ms. Brown for Federal dollars to keep Hillary House going, drawing comparisons to recent Federal projects surrounding Bethune House in Gravenhurst.

"We are appreciative for your support of the Historical Society and Hillary House," Mayor Dawe told the audience. "I very much appreciate, John, the work that you do and the Historical Society has done in recent years to support this fabulous treasure we have here in Aurora."