

BROCK'S BANTER: A place to call home

By Brock Weir

A town is many things?

It has a spirit of its own, its own character

Its own reasons for being, its own causes

For growth and for making people happy.

Aurora is such a town. It is home to 9,000 people. To thousands more throughout York County, it is the pleasant town where they meet friends when they come ?over to Aurora? or ?up to Aurora? or ?down to Aurora?.

For pleasant living, we have grand old streets lined with tall old maples; we have spanking new subdivisions with new lawns and shrubs and people who care; we have parks and schools and playgrounds. We have space for small boys to roam and to hike. We have a town that is ?home?.

Industry too, finds that Aurora is a good ?home?.

Our town leads the county in industrial assessment.

Controlled expansion protects the homeowner and the industrialist against sky-rocketing taxes. And all the while, Toronto, Canada's largest and wealthiest consumer and industrial market, is just a few miles ?down the road? from Aurora.*

For people and business alike, this is a good hometown.

A lot has changed over the last 54 years since the above passage was written just inside the front cover of a 1962 guide to Aurora published by what was once known as the Aurora Junior Chamber of Commerce.

Found in a mysterious cardboard box of seemingly random artefacts from across Canada and around the world, apparently with no threads tying it all together, the vivid yellow and red cover immediately caught my eye. As I was leafing through it, I made a note of the featured businesses still serving Aurorans to this day ? less than five, but five on a technicality ? and wondered what the Chamber of Commerce members behind this publication would think of the business climate today and those who have come and gone.

By the time I got to the front ? and, admittedly, I am one of those weird people who often leafs through a magazine back to front ? I couldn't help but stop and consider the unattributed essay above.

In some ways, Aurora is still such a town. It might be a far cry from the bustling community of 9,000 people it was in 1962 ? and, then-mayor Keith Nisbet noted on the next page, over half of these 9,000 flooded Aurora in the previous four years alone ? but people throughout this newfangled Regional Municipality of York probably still have pleasant thoughts of coming over/down/up here (unless they have to drive the Yonge and Wellington corridor to do so).

We still have some grand old streets lined with tall old maples, although some of our more venerable tree species and the houses they've overlooked for the better part of a sesquicentennial have become something of an endangered species.

We still have ?spanking new? subdivisions of new lawns and shrubs; they have just moved further east and, while the ?spanking new? communities of 1962 have matured over the years, they still welcome new and growing families. People who care.

We still have a growing number of parks, schools, and playgrounds and above and beyond providing spaces for ?small boys? to roam and to hike, but 54 years later we're probably mature enough to admit that ?small girls? like to roam and hike as well without risk of being blackballed from the Junior League.

Many of us can proudly say we have a Town that is ?home? ? and if it isn't, maybe you should rethink your strategy.

Industry, however, might be a different story.

The primary industries touted in this handy dandy brochure ? the precursor to Sterling Drugs being one full-page example ? have gone under and industries Aurora could only imagine being in the offing arrived to take their place?only to be preparing, with Magna being just one example, for an exodus.

Expansion is still controlled ? well, depending on who you ask ? and growth assessment is keeping taxes from taking flight, and, the last time I checked, Toronto hasn't moved out of place, although it has expanded considerably since 1962. (Oh, in case you're wondering about the asterisk: ?*To be exact, 12.9 miles to Metropolitan Toronto limits, 25 miles to city hall.)

If today's Chamber of Commerce were to take this manifesto as a blueprint, I wonder what it would say to promote as a place to do business. Today's motto of ?You're in Good Company? is not far off from the principles put out there in the publication but, for better or worse, things have changed.

If you were to take what the Juniors put out there in 1962 and craft your own, what would it be?

Aurora might still have a spirit of its own, its own character, its own reasons for being, its own causes for growth and making people happy ? but what are they today? Are these characteristics definable for you?

I'd love to hear your thoughts. Send them to brock@auroran.com.

For the record, here are Mayor Nisbet's thoughts on the subject: ?Your town has been one of Canada's fastest-growing small towns. Over half of the 9,000 population has moved here during the past four years. Yet aurora has kept that small town spirit of working together. Citizens, old and new, support our churches, sports, our Boy Scouts and Guides, service clubs, the drama workshop and dozens of other organizations. This helpful activity of the Jaycees is typical of Aurora organizations who will work and make sacrifices on behalf of their community.?

Maybe the spirit of its own is: ?Aurora ? hanging onto its small-town feel since 1962.?