

BROCK'S BANTER: "And if you threw a party, invited nobody you knew..."

By Brock Weir

A couple of years ago, I used this space to vent about a certain dilemma I was having.

It wasn't anything serious. In fact, in the grand scheme of things, it was nothing at all ? but a curious phenomenon unique to this day and age: hate watching.

Surely, you have heard of ?hate watching?: the act of watching a television show or movie with the sole reason of complaining about it leading up to, during, and after the broadcast or screening. It's a vicious cycle and I speak from experience.

Chances are, you've hate watched a show you don't particularly like just to draw some closure on a character or plotline you have inexplicably become invested in.

At the time of that writing, my hate watch du jure was Aaron Sorkin's *The Newsroom* on HBO. The conceit of the show was reinterpreting how breaking news stories, spanning the last decade or so, would have been covered in a CNN-style news environment.

The twist, however, is the show covers real events with the benefit of a year or two of hindsight, so our fictional heroes can rise above every misstep in reportage that plagued their colleagues in the real world and emerge with their reputations unscathed.

In that rant, I stuck my tongue firmly in my cheek, took a few of the local issues of the day that had recently wrapped up after long and arduous processes, and pondered how local media might have reported on them if we too had the benefit of such hindsight.

Now, we have just such an opportunity to put this into action this week, thanks to the office of Premier Kathleen Wynne and the Provincial Government.

Newmarket-Aurora was the chosen riding for a particular good news story on Thursday as Premier Wynne, accompanied by local MPP Chris Ballard, local politicians, and dozens of our celebrated, medalled Special Olympians descended on Newmarket's Magna Centre to announce a \$7.2 million investment to promote active lifestyles through the Ontario Sport and Recreation Communities Fund.

Through this investment, a major beneficiary will be Special Olympics Ontario and their efforts to introduce more special needs athletes to sports such as soccer, swimming, basketball, and track and field, all of which are bustling with activity as far as Special Olympics Ontario ? Aurora is concerned.

Cast wider, this Special Olympics Funding in particular will go into their Partners in Play program, which will ensure the money is spread through 24 community partners in nearly 40 communities to over 1,300 individuals.

A good news story? A great news story!

To compound the joviality of the occasion, spirits were, of course, buoyed by the announcement in the wee hours of the morning the Ontario Government had reached a tentative deal with Secondary School teachers ? at least those in the public stream ? thereby going a long way to put thousands of minds at ease as the dawn of a new school year approaches.

?Our government is committed to investing in programs that promote the health and well-being of people of all ages across the Province,? said Premier Wynne. ?Through the Ontario Sport and Recreation Communities Fund, we are providing the support that families need to live a more active lifestyle while creating new opportunities for young people to engage with their communities.? Glen MacDonnell, President and CEO of Special Olympics Ontario, highlighted the importance this investment will play in his organization.

?The Partners in Play Program will foster the creation of program partnerships with local community sport organizations and open the door for meaningful participation for people with intellectual disabilities in new joint sport initiatives across the Province,? he said. ?Special Olympics Ontario is grateful for the contribution of the Ontario Government through the Ontario Sport and Recreation Communities Fund in supporting this vital project and investing in the promotion of the integration and inclusion of athletes with disabilities with the creation of a vital and active Ontario.?

I'd like to share with you the excitement and delight I saw on the faces of the dozens of Special Olympians, their coaches, and their families not only as they learned of the investment, and they met with the Premier and the other assembled dignitaries, but also as they were able to hit the pool and show off the results of all their hard work in the water.

I'm sure my colleagues at our other local media outlets would like to share this with you as well but we're all in the same boat.

Unfortunately, we only have the photos that began to trickle in through social media after the event had taken place to go by ? and the footage that provided an upbeat and happy accent to the otherwise dreary noontime and dinner hour newscasts.

But, that's the way the ball bounces.

You see, for a \$7.2 million announcement that will directly benefit athletes in nearly 40 communities, local media were not invited to share in the occasion. We were not invited to cover the event, nor were we even given a heads-up that the Premier was making her way to the riding, which is unusual as there was a time when we would receive her itinerary, and that of her predecessor, on a near-daily basis whether they were visiting Aurora or Zephyr.

It was suggested to me over the phone that afternoon ? although in not so many words ? by a person who had an organizing role in the event that The Auroran should take comfort in the fact we were not singled out and local media as a whole was left out in the cold. Cold comfort.

Shortly after the pictures from Thursday morning's announcement started to roll in through social media challenges, so too did a new set of photos ? this time with the same cast, but in a different location. The party had moved from the Magna Centre to The Maid's Cottage, a mainstay on Main Street, Newmarket, famed for their butter tarts.

As I closely examined the photos of the Premier taking a bite of their signature pastry, one could see a who's who of local Liberal dignitaries, looking on with delight. Again, alas, it seems our invitations were lost in the mail ? so you can join us all in a second hand thrill.

This week, however, with Justin Trudeau set to visit Newmarket-Aurora this Wednesday, August 6, the wheels seem to be back on the bus. So, happily, if all goes according to plan, check next week's edition for full coverage.

And, most importantly, congratulations to all our Special Olympians. Having had the pleasure of interviewing so many of our athletes, their coaches and parents over the years, I know it is money well spent and we will all reap the benefits. Well done, guys and gals!