

BROCK'S BANTER: BL Cultura Regularis

By Brock Weir

Months of rumblings over Quebec's Charter of Values came to a head at the end of last week as countless Quebeckers took to the street, regardless of gender, ethnicity, and any other divides, to protest the values in it.

As you know, the document would prohibit, among others aspects, the wearing of religious symbols such as crosses and the Star of David, instantly recognizable garments such as turbans, hijabs, and yarmulkes by public employees, students, doctors, nurses, and persons in other sectors of the community.

These rumblings were getting louder and louder as last week began and the eruption should have surprised no one. By Tuesday, as I sat unusually slack jawed at what was unfolding at the week's Council meeting, I considered what was just on the cusp in Quebec with a slight word of thanks.

After all, if the biggest concern regarding Culture in Aurora is whether Sport Aurora should be in a group to help draft a blueprint defining culture, we're in pretty good ? if monumentally dull ? shape.

Numbers of groups taking part in the group were deliberately kept low to keep them manageable, according to Al Downey, Director of Parks and Recreation. Discussions, however, became as unwieldy as what they were trying to avoid. Sarcastic scenarios were offered, the fear of God was invoked, and soon it became clear the only orderly idea of culture in this Town could be found in the bottom of an Activia tub.

It is highly important for Aurora to have some sort of cultural blue- print. Through the Aurora Cultural Roundtable, for example, a fledgling group consisting of the Aurora Cultural Centre and Aurora Public Library, among others, it is clear they've found a winning formula of strength in numbers and cohesion. The results of their efforts will be seen at the end of the month as Aurora marks its second annual participation in Culture Days on September 28.

Theirs is not the first cultural collaboration in Aurora, but it is clear that getting on the same page has worked remarkably well for them and they have become stronger together.

Anyone daring enough, however, to take on this herculean task of herding these diverse tasks is to be commended. After all, it takes a special kind of person to take on this fool's errand, even if they are a consultant paid to do just that.

Culture has always been an unusual commodity in Aurora. It is defined in as many different ways as there are households. Initiatives such as the Cultural Centre and a certain jazz festival were the centre of very proprietary arguments before controversies surrounding them came to their natural conclusions. These proprietary arguments were passionately defended by people who got on board these initiatives at the ground floor, defending all comers who had suggestions for change, constructive or otherwise.

Library Square, which could become Aurora's next truly significant cultural endeavour, has been at the centre of a flurry of inaction for over 12 years. There is still no decision made, yet some quarters view coming to a decision on its future after a decade is somehow moving at an unnerving breakneck pace.

Council's debate over just what to do with the Aurora Collection is still painfully fresh in the minds of many so, although the collection was formally transferred to the Town in August, there is no need for a rehash. Suffice it to say, however, it was no walk in the park to get to that point.

While we're on the subject of parks, consider the curious case of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Park. Since Civic Square Park was renamed in honour of Her Majesty's milestone anniversary earlier this year to commemorate an already year-old celebration, I'll lump it in under the cultural category for the sake of argument.

God only knows ? yes, the same God who was apparently left out of the Cultural Master Plan Group (See Page 7) ? when this park will be open and dedicated, with or without an accessible playground for the entire community to enjoy, but it is not beyond the realm of possibility it could be ready just in time for King Charles' Coronation some years away.

To try to keep everyone happy by keeping the number of groups ? with a healthy shot of municipal representation ? on this committee to chart our cultural future is an impossible task. Much of Council's debate has focused on Sport Aurora's inclusion. It is a fair point. After all, whether culture includes sport is a matter of personal opinion.

I happen to lean towards yes, sport is part of culture. I do, however, see the point that having some representation from minor hockey and youth soccer would not be out of order. But, if you're going to have the narrowest definition of culture, Sport Aurora is the group for the job, if only for the simple reason of the Aurora Sport Hall of Fame, a welcome inclusion on Aurora's cultural dessert cart.

To all those who will eventually form a group to draft what could become a significant plan for Aurora's future, I look forward to

your findings. Take comfort in the fact that whatever findings these might be, they are unlikely to lead to angry masses gathering on Church Street bound for John West Way wielding hockey sticks, and soccer balls, armed with freshly sharpened cleats.

CORRECTION

In last week's column, I wrote, "Councillor John Abel was astute to note that there was no shortage of problems listed but what was lacking was a list of ways to possibly overcome them." This astuteness actually belonged to Councillor John Gallo.