

BROCK'S BANTER: Or die trying!

By Brock Weir

Show of hands ? how many of us remember back to those heady days of being a four or five-year-old getting mentally prepared for that daunting first day of school?

If you just raised your hand, chances are you recall one of two things ? a) the excitement of getting out of the house and meeting new friends, meeting new teachers, and learning new things? or b) the fear and trepidation that came with getting out of the house, meeting new friends, meeting new teachers and learning new things.

Unless you're a rare case, you sucked it up, brown bagged it, strapped on your backpack and made the slow walk to your bus stop, or the school itself, having no real concept of the big, bright future that was before you.

Fast forward several years, and you very might very well have had a rerun of the same experience as you weighed your options on what to do once high school wrapped up.

If you're of a certain age, you're probably trying to help guide your own kids and grandkids to make the right decision right now at this pivotal point in their lives.

In those early days, you went off to school because it was either something you were eagerly looking forward to or because it was something your parents said you had to do. Either way, the latter was always true.

The second phase is significantly different. You have the whole world opening up to you.

Depending on your grades and interest, you can apply for university, investigate colleges for hands-on studies, or look for opportunities to launch directly into the workplace. You take a leap of faith, hoping you're making the right decision, knowing that, for better or worse, you are moving forward.

You might have come to regret your decision; you might have backtracked to this crossroads once again to follow a different path; you probably emerged stronger.

But, the important thing is you made a decision.

Perhaps our local lawmakers need to take a look back at the thrill they got from making that very important leap in their lives.

As The Auroran went to press this week, it seemed Council was once again putting on its leaden boots when it comes to making a decision on what should be done with Aurora's Downtown Core.

This has been a problem that has been on the table for very close to 20 years with nearly 50 solutions brainstormed and presented to Council over the last 15 years, and politicians dragging their heels repeatedly over the last 14 years citing over and over again the breakneck speed in which potential solutions and magic bullets are flying at their faces.

There has to come a point where, after 15 years, accusations of moving too fast have to be taken well and truly off the table.

Having been privy to public discussions on the subject for just six of those 15 years, I can tell you in that time I have seen five residents of this Town, some of Aurora's more actively engaged citizens on this subject, townspeople who contacted me personally to sound off on the issue?

Well, let's get down to the cold reality: they're dead.

I'm sure they tried their best to hang on to see something ? anything ? borne to fruition, but, alas, it was not to be.

Given the nature of the delegations presented to Council at the committee level last week, along with the comments of Council members and Town Staff, it seems we'll have a bone pile as expansive as the Paris Catacombs before ground is broken on anything municipally driven in the Downtown Core, whether it is on the Yonge Street drag itself or the not-so-newfangled concept of a Cultural Precinct.

Holding my breath throughout a good chunk of the meeting when the conversation seemed to be heading sideways, I began to slowly exhale when Councillor Wendy Gaertner underscored just how long it has taken to get to this point, citing John West, one of the aforementioned five, as one of the people in the trenches with her. The lungs seized one again, however, when she said the accelerated development of the Cultural Precinct Plan was Council ?going too fast.?

?I think we have a wonderful opportunity to mark our Council as a very special, forward-thinking, and a Council that really cared about making Aurora better for its residents,? she said. ?Let's be careful, let's do it right.?

Added Councillor Jeff Thom: ?We have had considerable consultation with the community, all of which has not been positive.

Rightly, we have to look at this and say, ?Why would we go to phase three where we are going into a more detailed costing that not everyone is buying into??"

The truth of the matter is no matter how many years these downtown projects are delayed, there is never going to be anything on the

table that is going to garner a 100 per cent buy-in from the community as a whole. Politicians, try as they might, are never going to please everybody, no matter how far they can bend over backwards. Heck, the neighbourhood in question can't even agree on why municipal efforts to designate their southeast quadrant Aurora's second Heritage District went belly up, with some choosing to ignore the very existence of the overwhelming opposition to such a designation within their own neighbourhood.

This is not the only Council that has had the opportunity to mark itself ?as a very special, forward thinking?Council that really cared about making Aurora better for its residents.? Since the issue of Library Square came up, five Councils have had this chance and, so far, Aurora has very little to show for it aside from money spent on consultants to have jaw sessions with residents and a stack of binders that might need its own special room in the new Joint Operations Centre.

Communities as close as Newmarket are enjoying accolades from far and wide for the steps they have taken to revitalize their downtown. I am not talking about their Main Street because their circumstances are very different from ours, but the areas surrounding this prime corridor are thriving thanks to their politicians, despite a lack of 100 per cent consensus, taking a leap of faith and hoping for the best.

Aurora should take the leap as well.