

BROCK'S BANTER: Outfoxed

By Brock Weir

The summer has left us for another year, and it is just another handful of days before this September is consigned to the history books and, as soon as that has wrapped, the breakneck pace which often typifies the first month following the summer holidays should settle into a happy medium. Well, at least after October 19.

After the sleepy days of summer when many Aurora residents lucky enough to have one spend most of their time at the cottage ? or relying on the kindness of cottaging friends ? there almost seems to be an increased effort to make up for lost time, wanting to cram two months' worth of activity into a single, unsuspecting month.

Take, for example, this past weekend. It was a very busy time for those of us tasked with monitoring the goings-on in Aurora.

The fun started midday Friday when the organizers behind Magna's Wild, Wild West Hoedown opened up their tent for hundreds of special needs students from across York Region to give them a true festival experience.

Speaking as someone who is often engulfed in political issues facing our community, whether municipal, provincial, or federal, this special Hoedown was a particularly nice change of pace.

The joy emanating from underneath the big top was a veritable tonic to all the less-than-stellar things going on in our world right now. It underscored the good that can be done in the world around us if the right people ? and the right number of people ? are all rowing in the same direction for the greater good.

The fun continued late into that evening with Night One of Hoedown featuring the Hoedown Showdown and headliner Jim Cuddy, as well as the Home Opener for the Aurora Tigers.

The next evening, headliner Dallas Smith and the Road Hammers took the stage for the main event, while local cadets joined members of the Royal Canadian Legion in lighting individual candles on each grave of a veteran in Aurora Cemetery, creating a sea of flickering red lights, which is a particular sight to behold on a dark, rainy evening.

Sunday got off to a rousing start with hundreds taking part in the annual Terry Fox Run, followed by a charity car show, the 10th anniversary celebrations at the 'new' Aurora Seniors' Centre building, and a return of the Legionnaires and cadets as they concluded their commemorations with a traditional drumhead service at the cemetery.

Not being able to be everywhere at once, I was heartened to hear from Jake Courtepatte, our sports reporter, that this year's Terry Fox Run was an undoubted success. Kudos to the organizers for ensuring, even at a local level, that Terry Fox's legacy endures, strong as ever, even after 35 years, being able to bring together people from all walks of life, regardless of creed or political stripe ? again, all rowing in the same direction.

I shouldn't have been too heartened, however, as soon after I received reports on the Terry Fox Run from our man on the ground, my phone beeped. Lo and behold, it was a statement from the Conservative Party of Canada on the Terry Fox Run.

As my inbox has been flooded recently by statements from the leaders of the Conservatives, NDP, Liberals and Greens marking a wide-range of national and religious occasions, I thought this would be a run of the mill email congratulating all those taking part in the runs that got people off their collective duffs in all corners of Canada.

Not so.

It was an announcement from James Moore that a re-elected conservative government would 'match donations for this year's 35th annual Terry Fox Run to a maximum of \$35 million, provide capital funding of \$12.5 million to establish the Canadian Cancer Society's Cancer Prevention Centre in Vancouver, in conjunction with other levels of government and private donors, [and] renew its commitment to the Canadian Partnership against Cancer, which works with cancer groups and experts across the country to treat and prevent cancer.'

This is a laudable commitment, to be sure, and one which would bring significant benefit to all Canadians. But, as is so often the case, timing and context is everything.

'Our government is committed to a publicly-funded, universally accessible and sustainable health care system,' said Moore in the statement. 'Justin is just not capable of managing Canada's finances and ensuring health transfers keep increasing while budgets remain balanced and taxes stay low.'

'Mulcair and the NDP say that they will spend even more on health transfers but haven't said how they will pay for it. Based on their record in numerous provinces, the NDP will wreck the economy and weaken the services that Canadians depend upon.'

And thus, the 35-year legacy of Terry Fox, a legacy which has served as a uniting force, was crassly turned into a political football and springboard for an attempted takedown of other party leaders.

I cannot stress enough how positive this announcement would have been on any other day. Indeed, it would have been spectacular if the Conservative Government marked the 34th anniversary of the Terry Fox Run in a non-election year by matching monies raised by up to \$34 million but, alas, it is not the case.

Apparently, in order to free up this much needed donation and commitment to fighting cancer, voters need to let their ballots do the talking and that's a shame. Money to fight a scourge such as cancer should not be held hostage to the fickle finger of fate wielded by the Canadian voter as a collective, and certainly not in the name of Terry Fox.