

BROCK'S BANTER: "Please postpone your conversation."

By Brock Weir

If you've ever been to a movie at Cineplex, you know the drill.

Once you're settled into your seat, you're given fair warning and pre-emptively shamed if you share any of the more loathsome qualities of 'Tommy Texter', the dude who annoys everyone around him with the light from his Smart Phone as he texts a running commentary of whatever blockbuster he happens to be seeing. Then there is Sally Seatkicker. You really don't want to be her - apparently the doyenne of making the person sitting in front of her make a bee-line from the theatre as the credits roll straight to an ObusForme back rest.

You don't want to be Tommy or Sally. Nobody wants you to be Tommy or Sally. Even worse is finding yourself to be their chatty friend, who is also publically shamed before they even open up their mouth before asking their seatmate for clarifications on the plot.

Tommy, Sally and the other guy are my nemeses. I strive not to be like them and have considered a living will to the extent that if I am ever caught texting during a film screening, the executor of my estate will have full rights to hook me up to a machine with the expressed purpose of pulling the plug.

Chatting, however, sometimes gets the better of me, as it did on Sunday night.

A friend and I were in Toronto for a screening of Alfred Hitchcock's film, *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, with James Stewart and Doris Day. Neither of us had seen the film on the big screen and that seemed like a golden opportunity. For the uninitiated, the film features the stars as an American couple - a doctor and his wife - on vacation in what was then French Morocco and unwittingly find themselves involved in an international assassination plot after meeting the wrong people in the wrong place at the wrong time and their son is kidnapped as a result.

A key piece of the set-up is a white character donning dark makeup to pass unnoticed in a Marrakesh market place with the brown foundation coming off at a rather opportune remark. Whispering, my friend and I turned to each other to make a very quiet smart-ass remark or two about whether that would fly today, before I received a very light tap on the shoulder?

'Excuse me??' said the hushed voice from a couple of seats to my right before he continued in a French accent: 'Could you gentlemen please postpone your conversation??'

Let me say at the outset that being told to settle down by a man with a French accent during a film set in the former French Morocco had a certain charm, which the TIFF Bell Lightbox should consider as a feature in all future screenings of films in similar locales.

However, what struck me was this was the most polite way I have ever been told to 'shut up?' and I have been told this more than my fair share of times.

'Please postpone your conversation,' is a phrase I think would fit in any lexicon and has so many applications.

As I had time to ponder this phrase on a long-ish subway trip afterwards to Etobicoke, I thought it also had many applications here in Aurora.

Last week, Council seems to have made the decision to postpone their second Council conversation in July to an already scheduled meeting in August, despite a second July date being passionately advocated for each year. In addition, several long-promised conversations around the table have been postponed pending further jaw sessions with members of the public before any talks can ultimately bear fruit.

A final conversation to settle, once and for all, whether a proposed pilot program to limit Yonge Street in the Downtown Core to one lane in each direction has been postponed to the 2017 Budget Discussions, which are expected to get underway this fall.

Long - and repeated - conversations over the future of Library Square have been postponed too many times to count, not to mention the delayed conversations that need to be had over the Cultural Precinct Plan and repurposing studies in which it prominently features.

There is often ample time to have these talks, but it is just a matter of striking while the iron is hot - or sweltering, as the case might be.

Many of these delays come from that pesky little animal known as Summer, which comes in each year with the regularity of a child on a strict Milk of Magnesia regimen growing up in the era when *The Man Who Knew Too Much* topped the box office.

Two-to-three months of fun in the sun, depending on when you decide to get the party started, with little thought allowed to the civic-minded issues that need to be sorted out.

It is a fairly common routine in Aurora where the arms cranking the gears of progress grind to a halt in the belief there is a mass

exodus out of our fair burgh for cottage-and-country life.

Lawmakers often exhibit the telltale signs of heatstroke at the very suggestion that public consultations and surveys be carried out during this short window of warmth as you can roll a bowling ball down Wellington Street and not hit a car ? or so the belief seems to go.

I was heartened, however, that at the last Council meeting, Councillors seemed prepared to bite the bullet and enter the brave new world of asking the public what it thinks over a few of the multitude of traffic overhauls that have been suggested for the Town's historic core.

It is an inevitability. One can't simply stop the momentum of any project ? for better or worse ? because certain members of the community are cottage-bound while the going is good.

In my view, it is a step in the right direction.

I have often wondered if the standard policy of not having public consultations over the summer months is increasingly becoming an outmoded way of thinking.

It might have held true in the first half of the 20th century when Aurora was a small community with a mix of small business and farms with a few large scale industrial businesses and factories, as well as the latter half of the century, spilling over into the first bit of the 2000s, when the Town was positioned as a more exclusive enclave with a large amount of estate residences for the well-heeled-with-cottages that would rather be anywhere else but Aurora during the steamy months of summer.

East of Yonge Street, community demographics are rapidly changing. Younger families of various backgrounds are moving into the Town's emerging east side while homes in the Downtown Core seem to be becoming increasingly filled with young families drawn to the more romantic ambiance of the area.

It seems unlikely that these new residents and those putting down new roots are necessarily going to on holidays or lolling around lake houses through July and August. If summer camp enrolment is anything to go by, that is a good measure of the observation.

In short, summer no longer seems to be an obvious time to postpone one's conversation, unless you are in the darkness of a movie theatre. Postponement simply halts momentum and if it is an issue residents feel strongly about, they will make sure they are there to participate.