

BROCK'S BANTER: Settling for Silver

By Brock Weir

Canadians are often celebrated for their own quiet sense of pride.

In some cases this pride is self-celebrated.

Whether this pride is pride from afar or part of introspection, the quiet pride can take on a crescendo all its own when it is threatened or otherwise tarnished.

Take, for example, the storm in a teacup that erupted in South Korea last week when Jocelyne Larocque was awarded the silver medal, along with the rest of the Canadian Women's Hockey Team, in the wee hours of our Thursday morning.

No sooner had the silver made a half-hearted pendulous half-swing across her chest then it was unceremoniously taken off by its recipient as the rest of her teammates down the line continued to receive theirs.

It was a gesture which had many Canadians ? and indeed some international observers ? clutching their proverbial pearls.

Athletes win gold and bronze, some sports-minded pundits opined, adding that one merely ?settled? for silver, having to be content with second-best

I'm not sure I agree with that assessment, but nobody has ever accused me of being an athlete.

Nevertheless, amid her defenders, presumably those in the know, this was a common refrain, but Larocque herself weighed into the fray the next day.

?In the moment, I was disappointed with the outcome of the game, and my emotions got the better of me,? she said in a statement on Friday.

Reading the varied reactions in the meantime, however, I kept hearing the echoes of a heated discussion which took place around our Council table just a few nights before.

Although things could change after press time this week, I have to wonder if Aurorans will be heartened that their Council is not content to settle for second best.

Sitting at the Committee level last week, Councillors turned down a recommendation from staff which would have appointed the Deputy Mayor of Aurora as Aurora's alternate voice around the Regional Council Table, a governing body which currently only has one voice from this Town ? Mayor Dawe.

This lone voice is something that has been stuck in the craw of this Council, as well as Councils, as Regional Council has uniformly turned down the bids of Aurora and other single-vote municipalities for another seat at the table.

Bids by single-vote communities like Aurora and King Township to gain that all-important extra seat have been turned down flat by fellow Region-mates, laying the foundation for some significant angst, including a vote by Council to direct Aurora's Regional vote to knock down similar requests from abundantly represented municipalities in the Region's southern tier.

Throughout the multiple conversations on this matter, it was clear that although a second seat would be the ideal situation, a Regional alternate, someone who speak on Aurora's behalf ? and ultimately cast a vote representing the community's interests ? in the off chance Mayor Dawe was unable to attend a particular Thursday meeting in Newmarket was the next-best-thing.

But, with just a few months left before the 2018 Municipal Election, the tides seem to have turned ? and the contortions Councillors executed in order to turn those tides almost better than any Olympic sport.

First out of the gate was Councillor Paul Pirri, who said he believed that seven months before an election was the wrong time to appoint someone to act as an alternate. There has been, he claimed, ?some level of politicking going on? regarding the matter, without elaborating any further.

Another naysayer was Councillor Michael Thompson who said he agreed that the timing just wasn't right with only five meetings left on the Regional calendar.

Another factor to consider, he added, was Aurora had not really been earnestly fighting for an alternate; instead the fight for representation was for an additional seat.

While that was indeed the crux of the argument, there was indeed advocacy around the table for an alternate.

Councillor Thompson's view was summed up by Councillor Mrakas, who said a recommendation for an alternate in the form of the Deputy Mayor was ?a little bit of settling,? and going forward would ?kill? any chances of reviving the conversation about an additional Regional seat.

After significant back and forth, the Deputy Mayor himself weighed in on the matter.

This position is currently held by John Abel, who secured this position by dint of being the top vote-getter in the fight for one of the

eight Council positions, a number which will be reduced to six by this fall's vote.

Over the course of the last four years, Councillor Abel, who, it should be stated, is mulling a mayoral bid in 2018, has increasingly found himself at odds with his Council colleagues on a myriad of issues, including, most recently, the redevelopments of both Library Square and the Aurora Armoury.

Responding to the positions of his fellow Councillors, he said their opposition to his appointment as the Mayor's Regional alternate was as much about personality as anything else.

Personality conflicts are, of course, in the eyes of the beholders but I think Councillor Pirri is correct in saying that there is some politicking going on.

In my opinion, Councillors balking at this appointment because it would be in effect for the 2018-2022 term of Council as well simply doesn't hold water.

This is a Council which has mercifully made a decision on Library Square, a project which will have to be steered through completion by the incoming Council. This is a Council which has got the ball rolling on transforming the historic Aurora Armoury, a project which will also be brought in for a landing by the next Council crop. This is also a Council which made the decision to reduce the very size of the 2018-2022 term of Council by two seats.

Regardless of personalities ? conflicts, or lack thereof ? Aurorans are the only ones who really lose in this debate.

When Regional Council opted to sit back and do nothing when presented with the opportunity to make their Regional Chair an elected position, and thus beat the Province of Ontario to the punch, arguments were made that Regional Council abdicated its responsibility to the residents of York Region.

Nevertheless, that decision was made and, unfortunately, so was the decision to deny Aurora a second seat at the table.

Getting the ability to appoint an alternate, an opportunity seized upon by King Township, is the next-best-thing, the silver medal.

I'm not sure how Council sitting back, forgoing the opportunity to take this medal in hand, thereby ensuring Aurora's collective voices are represented as strongly and consistently as possible at the Regional table, is keeping their eye on the gold.

In fact, I believe it does the community a disservice.