

BROCK'S BANTER: Sunny days, shovelling cares away

By Brock Weir

So, now it's all melting away.

For the foreseeable future, we're set to enjoy warmer-than-seasonal weather, which is perfect for those of you clamoring for the start of spring. For those of us who love winter, on the other hand, the great melt has the snow dissolving just as fast as our dreams of leaving the house in the morning shortly after a nice, hot shower with the resulting signs of steam streaming up from the scalp; our dreams of feeling, just once, the inside of the nose slightly freeze with that first blast of Arctic air; our dreams of feeling the snow crunch underfoot, which can make a rather pedestrian walk (ahem?) all the more satisfying.

Instead, we will have to content ourselves with the one winter wallop we received on Tuesday night, spilling over into the wee hours of Wednesday morning.

By the time the Council Chambers cleared after last Tuesday's meeting, it was clear that we were all in for a mess. After elected members made their tentative decisions on the potential six acre parkland on Mavrinac Boulevard, Aurora's new master plans for Parks, Recreation, and Sport, and an inordinate amount of time on whether or not the back door of the Aurora Family Leisure Complex should be open, and to whom, it was already a messy drive home and who could say for certain what we would wake up to.

After a few sweet dreams, which included a cameo appearance from Charlton Heston dressed as Moses, trying to part the doors of the AFLC, I was woken up early by the blazing sun, emphasized by the beautiful blanket of white on the ground.

Following an internal warmup involving the consumption of a full pot of tea, it was time to tangle with our first real taste of winter this season. The shovel was primed and ready to go the night before, strategically placed by the front door where the shovel itself wouldn't have to be dug out before its moment to shine, the salt was at hand just in case, and it was show time.

At first, since we have been very lucky ? or unfortunate, as your view might be ? in the snow department this year, it took a few heave-hos to get the muscles to remember what they need to do and, before too long, the machine was well oiled and, for once that early in the morning, my limbs and my core were at one, working together for a common cause. That typically doesn't happen until 10 a.m. at the earliest.

The sun still in full blaze, before too long it was time to ditch the coat, soak in the sun, and continue on. Before too long, most of the driveway was clear and by the time I reached the windrow, I had had an all-too-rare jaw session with my next door neighbour, and met a new one who waved heartily as she drove by, almost as if to boast about her early start on the shovelling front.

I wasn't bitter; I was proud of her get-up-and-go.

It was a great way to clear the head in advance of a busy workday and to clear any lingering cobwebs from the Council session the night before.

A few clouds, however, appeared on the horizon by the time I got to the office later that morning with a missive from the Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto, issuing a call to action to the many members of the flock from Cardinal Thomas Collins, Archbishop of Toronto.

His call to action, which was read out to congregants at services throughout the weekend under the umbrella of the Archdiocese, encourages members to rise up and speak out to their elected representatives in opposition to the wide-ranging recommendations facing Parliament on Doctor Assisted Dying.

I have previously written in this space about my personal support for Doctor Assisted Dying having watched a loved one, who herself was a proponent of the principle, wither away and languish in a body over which she had no control. Still, I too was surprised by some of the recommendations that came down, including assisted suicide be made available to those under the age of 18, as well as to those living with mental health issues.

The overall principle, however, remains a sound one, in my view, and will clearly be a painful debate for those ultimately tasked by the electorate in making a decision.

?Death comes to us all, sometimes suddenly, sometimes slowly,? said the Cardinal in his statement. ?Although patients benefit from medication that controls pain, they are fully justified in refusing burdensome and disproportionate treatment that serves only to prolong the inevitable process of dying. But dying is simply not the same as being killed. We are grateful for physicians and nurses and others who offer medical assistance to patients but it is never justified for them to kill a patient.

?Physicians across our country who have devoted their lives to healing patients will soon be asked to do the exact opposite. They will not be asked to ease their suffering by providing them with treatment and loving care, but by putting them to death. In fact,

killing a patient will no longer be considered a crime, but will actually be seen as a kind of health care, complete with legislation to cover it.?

He goes onto note that proposed legislation will force medical providers working in places with public funding to ?act against their conscience?, is intolerant of religious diversity and is ?religious discrimination that punishes those who so faithfully serve everyone who comes to them.?

It is here where, I believe, the Cardinal's sound concerns, from a religious standpoint, are smothered by a hyperbolic pillowcase. The aforementioned physicians who have indeed devoted their lives to the healing of patients will not be asked to do ?the exact opposite? by ?putting them to death,? they will be required to consult with their patient on the kind of care their patient would like to receive.

By framing it as a slippery slope where the average health care provider is tasked and required to bump off their patient is akin to arguments used in 2005 in the equal marriage debate that their exclusive matrimonial club would be diluted by becoming more inclusive and, worse, those who firmly promoted the idea the Federal government would force straight couples to ditch their husbands and wives too so they can hook up with their fellow book club members or poker buddies.

And there is not enough space on the page to go over the slippery slope of advocating for the status quo in the name of religious diversity because anyone with a clear mind knows where that debate ultimately turns.

Let's hope our lawmakers go into the debate that will ultimately implement this law with clear minds and hearts, and rid themselves of rhetoric in order to make a clear choice. Unfortunately, it doesn't look like there will be many more chances to do so over a good driveway shovel, but maybe a walk in the woods would suffice.