

BROCK'S BANTER: The Dog Days are Over

By Brock Weir

June is always a curious time of year in Aurora, particularly from the perspective of a local newspaper.

Throughout the course of the rest of the year, things typically follow a set pattern. Rested and alert following the winter break, Aurora gets back into its natural rhythm by the time Baby New Year is barely out of his swaddling clothes.

Schools pick up where they left off, businesses quickly get back up to seam, and there is a regular stream of events and issues to cover, events that are, more or less, pretty evenly spread around and manageable to cover.

This is a pace which is maintained through most of the spring, lasting just about to the end of May where the realization summer is soon to be upon us suddenly hits the population en masse. After that watershed moment, things start flying fast and furious. It is almost as if everyone in Aurora collectively decides now is the time to close any loose ends and jam in as many things as possible before the end of June.

This, of course, clears everyone's schedules for a nice, relaxing summer, replete with visits to the cottage (if you're lucky enough to have one), vacations (if you're lucky enough to afford one) and generally living large.

Some sensible people stick it out in Aurora at least until the last of the fireworks descend on Canada Day ? after all, this is Canada's Birthday Town and we know how to throw a good party ? before going on their merry way. After that? Cue the mass exodus.

Around this time of year I usually start looking forward to the dog days of summer, a time when my personal work schedule becomes a little bit more relaxed and there is a bit of breathing room between issues that crop up, events that need to be covered, and when people doing all the weird and wonderful things Aurorans have become known for make themselves known in one way or another.

On Thursday, however, it became clear that these dog days of summer are over before they even began.

This came about in the late afternoon as I went with the flow created by Federal Liberal leader Justin Trudeau when he made an unheralded stop in Aurora, which quickly turned into anything but. His mission, as it became clear ? and who were we not to accept it? ? was to do a brief circuit of Downtown Aurora (such as it is) to meet with people ? residents and business owners alike ? before moving onto Whitchurch-Stouffville.

There was nothing particularly out-of-the-ordinary about this visit, at least on paper. It was due to start at T.C.'s Burgers before looping north on Yonge Street to take in the visage of his father, immortalized on the mural painted on the southeast corner of Yonge and Wellington, heading south to end at the Aurora Public Library.

As soon as he walked through the doors of one of the community's favourite burger joints, however, all bets were off as he sat down with a group of students enjoying an after-school meal, just shooting the breeze. Through my years of covering these walkabouts, this is always risky business and the results usually hit one of the two extremes.

These kids seemed to be engrossed by their encounter and, as soon as Trudeau left to make the rounds, they excitedly picked up their phones to Instagram evidence of their encounter. Whether or not this had more to do with celebrity than political engagement will become clear in due time, but shortly thereafter, when Trudeau jumped up onto a Pepsi truck waiting for the light to turn green at Yonge and Wellington, clarity descended.

Newmarket-Aurora Liberal candidate Kyle Peterson was right ? this was the unofficial start of the Federal Campaign in our fair town, so rather than borrowing a few lyrics from Florence & the Machine, it might be more appropriate to paraphrase an iconic quote from Bette Davis in All About Eve?

FASTEN YOUR SEATBELTS, IT'S GOING TO BE A BUMPY SUMMER

Now that Mr. Trudeau has made a splash on a relatively small stamp of Aurora, it is now time to wait and see how incumbent Prime Minister Stephen Harper and NDP leader Thomas Mulcair are going to tackle this riding.

They're going to have their work cut out for them now as, as we know, the compact, manageable riding of Newmarket-Aurora as we know it will, in just a few months' time, be consigned to the dustbin of history. It's set to be replaced by a newly reconfigured riding of the same name incorporating all of Aurora north of Wellington Street, while the below-the-belt section of Aurora will vote in the new, mellifluous riding of Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill.

That's right: It's a matter of ?double your pleasure, double your fun? for the Town as a whole which will result in two clear winners by the end of the fall. They all want your vote, their leaders want your vote, and they will be here to stump for their candidates.

Also serving to spice things up will be the ongoing saga surrounding the redevelopment of the Highland Gate Golf Course. As The

Auroran went to press this week, final preparations were being made on a public planning meeting, which will be Council's first formal opportunity to discuss plans brought forward by the partnership looking to convert the former golf course into a residential development ? as well as take in comments from the public at large on the merits (or lack thereof) of what is proposed.

There will be no shortage of comments. This much was clear from the 400-plus residents who turned out this spring for a public information session on the same hosted by Geranium. In fact, this was so clear from the outset that the Town of Aurora had the foresight to realise they simply did not have enough room at Town Hall to accommodate everyone and subsequently had to book St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic High School to accommodate every resident looking to have their say.

This week's meeting will be the first of three public planning sessions currently scheduled to tackle this particular development, a slate which is scheduled to pick up once again this September. However, given the number of speakers at the information session, I wouldn't be surprised if this continues to be a dominant issue and bone of contention in what would otherwise be a relaxing ? albeit dull ? summer.

Let's get the party started.