

BROCK'S BANTER: The hills are alive?

I often wonder if there is something in the water here in Aurora.

Recent reports from the Town suggest all is well, but it's the only explanation I can think of on why issues pertaining to culture in this Town seem to either send everyone haywire or result in nearly inexplicable results.

Most recently we have seen the implosion of Lucid Community Development's Aurora Live festival after a mass exodus from their camp, but there has also been bitter back and forth between proponent and politician(s).

Sound familiar? Echoes of the year-after-year-like-clockwork battles between politicians and proponents of the Jazz Festival are still ringing in my ears, so this certainly didn't help matters. Now it seems that the battle lines around the Council table have slightly shifted.

One can imagine that a newcomer to Aurora taking in these shenanigans with fresh eyes might be baffled on what could possibly be so contentious about staging something seemingly as harmless as a music festival. Admittedly, it is still baffling to the initiated.

Shortly after the Lucid people came into the Council chamber armed with their Aurora Live! sign ready to pose with the Mayor and six of eight Councillors, an acquaintance who was one of the less vocal critics of the Aurora Jazz Fest took me aside and suggested a headline along the lines of, 'The Town will be alive with the Sound of Music again.'

I rolled my eyes at this analogy, but after the events of the last few weeks, I take it back. What would happen if Julie Andrews herself appeared in character atop Aurora's highest peak proclaiming 'the hills are alive' with what she had on offer?

What a reception she might receive!

Would one faction criticise her for being completely presumptuous and entitled? After all, who said Aurora's hills were in need of resuscitation? Would the residents be in favour of someone performing musical CPR on their green and pleasant land? Most importantly, would she have the utter gall to throw a fence up around her hill of choice?

And what of the other faction?

If Julie waltzed into Town asking to apply for a permit to hold a music festival on the hill of her choice, would they demand to see her credentials of other hills she has attempted to enliven with her own brand of song? Would they accept a mere notarized letter from Christopher Plummer or the heirs of Rodgers & Hammerstein? Would any support gained be obliterated if five of the seven Von Trapps kids decided to break away from the fold and set out on their own?

Our lawmakers often seem to take it upon themselves to take a proprietary stake in their own slice of Aurora's Cultural Pie, logic be damned. All sides of the Cultural Centre debate, however, seem to have finally blossomed into adulthood, but?

NOT SO FAST!

Both parties in Aurora's Great Cultural Centre Debate (successors to historians John McIntyre and Elizabeth Hearn Milner are going to have a field day with this topic when writing about Aurora's Bicentennial) are supportive ? or tolerant at the very least ? with Aurora's new Cultural Services agreement. Council, for instance, largely got what they wanted. They could have representation on the board, they have further input on their budget, more transparent financials, and a new permanent home for the Aurora Museum upstairs in the aptly named Aurora Room.

But one aspect of this that appears to escape the majority of Councillors who were pushing for this ? spare Councillors Humfryes and Abel ? is that one actually has to fill this room with something, or it is just a complete waste of space.

It was disappointing that Councillors are heading into this week poised to defer acquiring the Aurora Collection from the Aurora Historical Society until the completion of a Cultural Master Plan which will chart the future course of the Cultural Centre, Library, and like institutions within the wider context of Aurora as a whole.

The price tag is, of course, hefty, as these things often are, but this is Aurora's 150th anniversary, so what better time to exercise a little indulgence and secure Aurora's history in this milestone year? It can't be lost on Councillors that in the recent presentation by the group tasked with evaluating and appraising the collections that parts of this collection are in significant peril. While they praised many aspects of the current storage arrangement of heritage artefacts at the Aurora Cultural Centre, they couldn't stress enough that resources were not available to adequately tackle some of the more pervasive problems with the current situation, particularly the insect infestation currently gnawing away at the Town's textile heritage.

The stop gap solutions they have put in place in the meantime to slow down the infestation can only go so long. History tells us these master plans take a significant amount of time to develop. People hopeful that Council can bring this baby in for a landing before the end of the year are likely being far too optimistic.

I fear by the time all is said and done with the Cultural Master Plan, the price tag to acquire the Aurora Collection will be significantly reduced, if only because a few thousands of dollars worth of archival material has gone to satiate legions of carpet

beetles.

Not the most fitting of birthday legacies.