

BROCK'S BANTER: Turn off, Tune in, Sign up

By Brock Weir

By the end of this week, the deed will be done.

Any man or woman, presumably of sound mind and body, will have made their decision and, with that, their fateful trek up or down John West Way to sign themselves up for what promises to be one wild ride.

Although some might ask whether signing their name on the dotted line as a Mayoral or Council candidate should call into question the 'sound mind' factor, one can only hope they made their decisions wanting to bring the very best they can to the Town they call home.

Once the book closes on Friday afternoon, Town Clerk Stephen Huycke will have the singular task of going through each and every name to verify that each respective candidate is duly entitled to seek election in Aurora.

His is not a task I would envy. Election season hasn't quite kicked off and those looking for election or re-election already seem to be bending his ear. Take, for example, a series of questions that unfolded at last week's General Committee meeting.

The first stemmed from the two referendum questions that will be on next month's ballot. To recap, you will be asked whether or not Aurora should adopt a ward system whereby Aurora would be divided up into distinct electoral areas each represented by an individual Councillor directly accountable to and for the people in their respective areas.

This simple question is accompanied by another question, possibly a more exotic chaser, in whether Council ranks should be reduced from the current complement of eight to a possibly wieldier six.

When Council approved these referendum questions earlier this year, they were supposed to be accompanied by some semblance of a public education campaign. Apparently this is now not going to happen. According to Mr. Huycke, there will be little more in the way of education above and beyond alerting voters that they are going to have to think beyond just names when they enter the polling station on October 27.

The reason, apparently, is 'any promotion of questions could be perceived to be campaigning,' said the Clerk. 'If any individual, trade union or corporation intends on spending money promoting these questions one way or another, they actually have to register with my office, and they are actually considered to be campaigning. We will be providing the public information about those questions and the basic information that will be on the ballot.'

In my view, this does not go far enough. While candidates 'Mayoral or otherwise' will have no shortage of opportunity to tell voters whether they think wards, and a possible reduction of Councillors, are a good idea, it is important for voters to hear from the people who are going to be implementing these changes on the pros and cons of each in an unbiased manner, possible scenarios on how Aurora might be divided up into wards, requirements of a ward Councillor versus an at-large Councillor, and whether or not taxpayers would realistically save any money by having two less bodies around the table.

Unless Mr. Huycke, or someone from the Clerk's office is planning a trip to Lourdes any time between now and October 27, let's be realistic 'Aurora is not likely to reach that magic number to make the vote binding. Just in case we do, however, voters should be provided with all perspectives 'political and practical.

Another gem stemming out of last week's meeting was a request from one Councillor seeking re-election encouraging the Clerk's Office to be one step away from becoming some sort of sign police in encouraging all candidates to play nice in the sandbox when marking their territory.

For all those who have recently set foot into the virtual campaigning abyss that is Twitter and Facebook, no sensible person would even try to task Mr. Huycke in playing Emily Post when Aurora's candidates have to leave the comfortable confines of their living room and office, and their laptop or iPhone, to come play in the big, bad world outside, a world where virtual flame wars focused on criticisms of one's personal and professional lives are, more often than not, couched in the word 'allegedly' as if it is a virtual hand washing. The real campaign will be much different, and not limited to the relatively small cluster of people who take time out of their day to check in on what their preferred (or otherwise) candidates are up to in the online world.

That time will come on September 15, when the Clerk has completed the verification process, and then it is time for the games to truly begin.

That is not to say that the players who made their early entry onto the field have been sitting on the sidelines waiting for that first whistle to blow. Quite the contrary. They have been making the most of their extra time on the field appearing at just about any event around Aurora 'and even beyond 'short of the opening of an envelope.

Many candidates have started to make the rounds, going door-to-door to tell potential voters why they are the best men and women

for the job. Personally, I have only had one knock from a candidate on my door, or rather a representative of a candidate (Hello, George!), but I am assured they are out there in full force.

The more they knock, the more voters they will reach and, consequently, it will be time for Aurora voters themselves to separate the men and women from the boys and girls, decide what issues matter to them, and who will truly be able to best represent them.

I, for one, look forward to the real campaign, a public campaign, and a public campaign with very real dialogue on very real issues facing this Town. If you're lucky enough to be elected, you will have until December to get down to the business of the Town. All Aurorans should be entitled to a sample of what they might be getting, and allowed the opportunity to make informed decisions.

SEEKING: ONE WHITE LIMO

Over the last couple of weeks, I have been thinking back over a chance encounter I had one summer with the late Joan Rivers. Milling around outside an obscure and overshadowed stage door, I had a degree of fascination seeing this entertainment icon in the equally iconic ? and sculpted ? flesh after a thoroughly energetic, blistering, and admittedly hilarious set.

After such a dynamic performance, I was struck at the sight of such a tiny, seemingly frail woman manoeuvre herself down a precarious set of wrought-iron steps with just a couple of people trailing behind her. Although she was still in full makeup, gone was the mask of bombast that one could see on stage even from the cheap seats. Not quite sure what to expect from who was (to anyone with at least one working eye and ear) a very caustic woman, I was pleasantly (and memorably) surprised by her kindness and patience as she took the time to meet each and every person outside the theatre.

After signing a few autographs and photos with literally anyone who wanted one, she made her way to her car, opened the door, looked me straight in the eye and said with a sigh, ?You have nothing to complain about in this world if you have a white limo waiting for you.?

Strange as it might seem, and without a limo in sight at this very moment, they seem like words to live by ? and I leave them here in her honour.