

## BROCK'S BANTER: Feasibility

The Feasibility of Feasibility

By Brock Weir

For nearly four years of writing for The Auroran, beginning when Mr. Citizen of the Year decided to take me on, months after the death of Dick Illingworth, I've learned more than I ever thought I would like to know about Aurora.

That can be laid squarely on the doorstep of Ron Wallace.

I was no stranger to the R&R Book Bar, first stepping through their doors when Rosemary was still at the helm of the Aurora Shopping Centre and getting lost in the cavern of used books in the basement. Following them from location to location, by the time the bookstore reached its final destination on Edward Street, I had no idea of the world that lay upstairs, beyond the handful of shelves on the second floor landing.

Responding to word on the grapevine that Ron was looking for someone to help fill some of the slack in November 2009, Ron personally ushered into to the alternate universe upstairs.

First impressions, of course, are very telling, but what can you make from an office lined with relics from Aurora's past, antique desks which looked like they wouldn't even budge for a 40-mule team, an entire wall lined with beer cans from every corner of the globe, another walk covered entirely with approximately 700 Harlequin romance novels, and a beautiful leather couch which lent the visual smorgasbord an unlikely air?

A conundrum? You bet. But, when I started work two weeks later, thrown headlong the following day into what was then a surprisingly benign meeting of the previous Council, given the brief pep-talk I received beforehand, everything became clear.

This was a man who loved Aurora and was more than eager to set someone like me on the same path.

That was task #1 for Ron and he did one hell of a job getting me up to speed quickly ? not just with the ?whos?, but the whys, the whens, and the hows. And how!

It also became clear very quickly that the guy sitting across the room from me was more than Aurora's answer to Lou Grant. He not only kept his finger on the pulse of Aurora, but his pulse beat right along with it.

It did then, it does today, and it will continue to do so ? but now, as Citizen of the Year, he has a mandate!

### **SPEAKING OF CONUNDRUMS?**

If it wasn't for working at The Auroran, my knowledge of Hillary House would be superficial at best. Undoubtedly, my knowledge of Horton Place would be even less remarkable. Nevertheless, I came, I saw, and, in the case of John McIntire's beautiful home at the corner of Yonge and Irwin, I was transported back in time.

Even if one has no idea the current condition of the mysterious home between the two properties, the concept of a heritage park on that stretch of Yonge Street is an intriguing one.

When supporters came forward stating that they would like to build this with \$6 - \$10 million of Aurora's Hydro Funds, with some Federal and Provincial grants, and private fundraising to meet the balance, it was obvious from the start this would be a difficult sell in Aurora, particularly for a fund which so many people seem to think they have a proprietary stake in.

Regardless, it is an interesting idea and one which I, personally, would like to see brought to fruition, but with as little public money as possible.

In the amount of time and number of prods it has taken to persuade Council of the benefits of proceeding with a feasibility study, organizers could have taken the time to secure their grants, rolled out their public and private fundraising initiatives, and presented a far more complete package to Aurora Council and, in turn, the citizens of this Town.

There have been innumerable delegations to Council and to the Town's heritage advisory committee to extol the virtues of the plan, hours upon hours spent at the Aurora Chamber Home Show to sell the idea to the public and gather up a list of potential supporters, and the generously donated time of one local architect to draw up some pretty impressive concept drawings of what could indeed be a significant business and cultural draw in Aurora's Downtown Core.

They have, however, gone the long way about it.

Had they started with their core group in beginning some cursory fundraising to secure the \$25,000 for their feasibility study, it could have been done months ago. Instead, we have a dynamic group of people with an equally dynamic idea, and all they have to show for it is the idea itself, an email list, and some lovely drawings.

Had they come to the table first with either a feasibility study or a business plan, perhaps Councillors will be kicking off their summer break with something meaty to chew on. Instead, come September, we will be back at Council, sitting through another six hour meeting debating the feasibility of the progress of the feasibility study, the feasibility of the feasibility study's final recommendations, and inevitably a deferral for another year to let the next Council bite the bullet and make a final decision. By that time, the inexplicably sudden urgency to do something with Readman House, a property which has languished on the market for approximately seven years, will be positively acute.