

## Council to take another shot at securing historic collections

**By Brock Weir**

Buyer's remorse doesn't typically come into play when people have delayed a bill of sale, but Councillors will have a shot this week at reconsidering their delay of acquiring the historic Aurora Collection for the Town.

Reconsideration was brought forward by Councillor Sandra Humfries last week. Passed by Council, this week will afford them another kick at the can in acquiring the large storehouse of historic artefacts currently owned by the Aurora Historical Society (AHS). Earlier this year, Councillors voted to delay discussions about acquiring the museum pieces until the completion of a Cultural Master Plan.

The Cultural Master Plan, which could be completed as early as this fall, but most likely no earlier than January, is due to put together strategies to chart how Aurora handles 'culture' in the future, including the Aurora Public Library and the Aurora Cultural Centre, but also related bodies such as the Aurora Historical Society.

Having a clear understanding of how everything fits together was important before taking such a costly step as acquiring the collection and paying for its upkeep, Councillors argued at the time, but Councillor Humfries maintains that time is of the essence.

'I was disappointed with the way things turned,' she said. 'We provided staff direction to work with the AHS< there was a framework delivered to us with a really great plan with timelines throughout the whole process, and everything was delivered as per committed by staff. Everything looked great and at the last minute some members of Council decided it would be more appropriate to wait for the Cultural Master Plan to get a strategy that we would pursue moving forward with a museum.'

'A Cultural Master Plan is a very high level scope of work that provides a vision. It gathers information from the community, demographic changes, and it suggests where we want to see ourselves in the next year and in 20 years. It is critical, it has to happen, but getting down to the details of putting a museum together, I don't see any impact at all.'

Under the terms of the Town's new Cultural Services Agreement between itself and the Aurora Cultural Centre, the Town is due to get the Aurora Room at the Church Street landmark. Council recently approved a nearly \$50,000 plan to outfit the room with an exhibit to mark the Town's 150th anniversary by July 1. This exhibit will have to be taken down by late fall to make way for one last Cultural Centre exhibition before the room formally becomes museum space on January 1, 2014.

Before Council made their decision to hold off on acquiring the collection, they received a presentation from auditors hired to evaluate the value and condition of the collection. While they said they were impressed by the variety of things in the collection and largely with how they were stored within the Cultural Centre, there were also several issues that needed to be addressed, particularly carpet beetle infestations in portions of the textile collections.

'For me, it is about protection and moving it forward without any further delay,' said Councillor Humfries of the importance of getting the collection, addressing the concerns, and making sure all ducks are in a row for the museum space in January.

'I am honoured that Council is giving me the opportunity to plead my case and hopefully they will find it when they realise from a business perspective that if you believe in having a museum and having artefacts back and cared for safely that you would know that a strategic cultural plan is not going to be the answer for a museum. We're almost ahead from that perspective.'