

Elves getting St. Nick camera-ready for Santa Under the Stars parade



The countdown is on for Santa Claus' big day in Aurora.

Preparations are underway for Aurora's popular Santa Under the Stars parade, which will take over Yonge Street on Saturday, November 23, from 6 ? 8 p.m.

Beginning at Orchard Heights Boulevard and progressing southward on Yonge Street to Murray Drive, the parade promises to be bigger and better than ever before.

Ahead of the parade, The Auroran sat down on a Zoom to the North Pole where Buddy the Elf shared some of what's in store and how he and the elves are getting Santa and the Reindeer ready to hit Aurora's downtown core.

The Auroran: What are you and the rest of the elves doing to prepare Santa and the reindeer for parade day?

Buddy: We're trying to work out a schedule ? we're dividing our time between the workshop and getting presents ready, but we also have to spend some time polishing up the sleigh, getting it ready to make the trek down to Aurora. As you know, Aurora is quite the distance from the North Pole. Our reindeers are going through their regular Reindeer Games to stay fit and Santa also has to get into some sort of yoga routine so he stretches properly, is limber and ready for the trek, too. These special visits around the community leading up to Christmas is like a rehearsal for him for Christmas Eve night, so you can imagine how taxing that is!

The Auroran: It sounds like he has a lot of work to do! How about you guys? What are the elves doing to stay ahead of the game?

Buddy: We actually start getting ready in the springtime. We're in our busiest season, so we had to be ready a couple of months ago because we're in full swing right now. Our vacation time is in January, so our cycle is slightly different than Santa's and the reindeer, but we're focused on making every shift as jolly as possible, while we work away for all the toys for all the deserving girls and boys on the nice list!

The Auroran: Has the boss let you in on any details on this year's Santa Under the Stars parade?

Buddy: From what I hear, word at the North Pole is the parade is bigger than in previous years. It's going to be really loud because there is a lot of marching bands and a lot of sports teams this year ? hockey, baseball, and there's even a chance there will be a national soccer team! Marching bands aren't something you see all the time everywhere. We always see all kinds of forms of music, in fact, even in the workshop with radios and Bluetooth and all those kinds of things, but a marching band always excites everyone, no matter your age. We're always game for marching bands!

The Auroran: What about the downtown attractions? Who else is getting in on the act?

Buddy: Hillary House usually does their delicious hot chocolate that night. As well, Machell's Alley [located on the east side of Yonge Street, just south of Wellington] is going to have picnic tables all set up, so it is going to be quite the jolly, happening corner. I hear that many of the businesses ? too many to count ? will be staying open later that night, decorating their windows, getting ready for all the festive cheer!

The Auroran: This is always a popular event bringing thousands to Yonge Street. What should spectators young and old do to get ready for the evening?

Buddy: We hear you should dress in layers, but as you choose your winter coat, be sure to put your letter to Santa in your pocket. Thankfully, Canada Post carriers will be back collecting letters for Santa, so bring it with you to make sure it gets directly to him. The sooner we get your letter, the sooner we can get working on your wish list, providing Santa has your name on the nice list! One of the factors that helps Santa select the nice list is for people to stay on the sidewalks, not in the road closures. With the road closures, although Santa is the rockstar of the night and the roads are primarily closed for his parade, there also has to be space for quick response by fire or emergency services and if people are sitting on the road to view the parade, it can potentially slow down the response ? which none of us want to happen. Just follow the rules and bring your best festive spirit, and everyone will have a great time!

For more information on this year's Santa Under the Stars parade, and to book an accessible spot along the route, visit www.aurora.ca/en/recreation-arts-and-culture/santa-under-the-stars-parade.aspx or email the Special Events Team at sreynolds@aurora.ca.

By Brock Weir