

INSIDE AURORA: A Seasonal Spot of Bother

By Scott Johnston

We're all aware of the challenges of parking in Aurora.

There's the chaos surrounding the exodus from the GO Train station every evening. Who would have thought that a newly-built five-level parking garage would be at complete capacity every day before the province has even begun ramping up all day train service through Town?

As for Library Square, we've all been stuck endlessly circling the area trying to find an elusive spot on a typical Saturday, just to spend a few minutes to pick up a book at the library, or drop into the Cultural Centre.

But these frustrations pale in comparison to what's ahead for us in Town, because it's the beginning of the Christmas season.

Yes, soon every parking lot, mall and side street will be inexplicably filled to capacity for what seems like 24/7.

It won't just be limited to the traditional places, like shopping centres, but literally everywhere, as people go out to parties, attend school plays, and take in Christmas concerts.

This is bad enough, but the problem is compounded by that thing that, ironically, people long to see this time of year; snow.

Of course, they long to see it through a window, gently falling, with beverage in hand, as they bask in the glow of a warming fire.

It's much different when you're out in the dark - and it's dark now many more hours than not - surrounded by tractionless vehicles whose drivers were planning to get their snow tires on by now, but something else kept coming up.

But the biggest challenge with snow is that while the flakes themselves are very small, once on the ground they collectively take up a lot of space.

When you're spending additional time trying to find a spot it's frustrating to know that at least 10% of the available parking is lying under an ever-growing ski hill's worth of the white stuff in a prime location in the lot.

There are some strategies that one can employ to mitigate the challenges of parking during this time of year.

One can take public transit, but local buses don't always go where you need to, or when.

Cycling and walking, while pleasant during the warmer months, tends to be less pleasurable on cold, blustery days (or nights), with a biting wind chill, especially if any packages you're carrying are large enough to act as small unwanted parasails.

As for taking the car, and braving the lots, you could choose to show up earlier or later than usual, but the quiet times where you want to go tend to be in the middle of the night, which over time can have a negative impact on one's circadian rhythm.

Some people follow folks as they leave the shops, overtly trailing them to their cars like really bad spies, and hovering while they load their packages.

This approach is good in theory, but there are a couple of problems. First, people leaving the mall could be just dropping off some stuff in their car, before heading back inside for Round Two of shopping.

Or, while silently stalking your potential spot, you may be unaware that other motorists are doing the same thing. When the space is finally vacated, four drivers will try to nudge in their vehicles simultaneously, making ?couldn't you see I was here first?, gestures, which may escalate into gestures which can't be described in a family paper such as this.

Fortunately, although holiday parking can be frustrating, there is a plus side. Not that it is associated with peace on Earth, and other warm seasonal sentiments, although those are nice.

No, the best thing is that it will all be over in a few weeks.

Feel free to e-mail Scott at: machellscorners@gmail.com