

INSIDE AURORA: E-X Marks the Spot

By **Scott Johnston**

In my mind one of the most interesting things that will come out of Monday's election is not the final results.

Oh sure, we all have a vested interest in who will be our mayor, or be included in the slowly decreasing number of councilors, but what I'm really curious to hear is what percentage of Aurorans voted.

Historically, we tend to get just over 30 per cent of eligible voters out to the polls each municipal election. That's a pretty sad number for such an important decision that only happens every four years.

It's not like there aren't controversial issues for folks to express their opinions on such as development, taxes, infrastructure, accountability, and a perennial favourite, Council dysfunction. These affect everybody.

As we've seen from previous contests, the various races are certainly never a foregone conclusion, so every vote counts.

But, for some reason, every four years people stay away from the balloting locations in droves.

In some cases the day of the election itself proves to be a hindrance. If you're on vacation, or have some other important commitments, it's understandable that you can't make it out.

Efforts have been made to alleviate this by offering advance polling in the weeks leading up to the election.

This has helped to a degree, but the overall turnouts are still low.

I think the main reason so few people show up is inertia.

After a full day that may include such things as work, school, commuting, taking care of the kids, volunteering, running errands, preparing meals, keeping appointments, and a million other things, all most people want to do is collapse on the couch with a beverage and put their feet up.

When you weigh the enticement of getting layered up to go out in the blustery fall weather, driving in the dark to somewhere with completely full parking lots that require endless circling before you can find a space, just so you can stand in a slowly moving line behind several people who neglected to bring any identification, before eventually getting your ballot and the opportunity to mark an ?X? or two, against the siren call of a warm couch, well, the latter can be pretty strong.

But something's happening this year that has the power to change all that, as electronic voting has finally come to Aurora.

This year, within a 9 day period before election day, voters will have the opportunity to vote from their electronic devices wherever they happen to be; at work, on the bus, watching TV, having breakfast, reading *The Auroran* anywhere, and any time of day.

And if one has last-minute questions about the stance of a specific nominee, or even just needs to pull up a photo to ensure the name they are about to check off aligns with the person they thought they remembered from a debate a few weeks earlier, the answers are only a brief bit of on-line research away.

In theory, the ability to vote for a longer period from where you usually are, rather than in a shorter period where you are mandated to be, should significantly reduce the ?inertia effect?, and get more ?X?es on the ballots.

If it doesn't, it's likely not the balloting process that's at issue, but the quality of the candidates, or the engagement of the voters in the campaign itself.

If that's the case, that's a whole other challenge to address.

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