

INSIDE AURORA: Flag Poll

By Scott Johnston

There was a recent photo and caption in The Auroran which noted that Aurora's flag would once again be flown at Town Hall. This is a bit confusing as there's always been a flag representing the Town. The issue is that for the past several years the newer flag has flown. Now the old one is back.

I'm sure sometime in future there will be questions raised as to why the new one's not being flown, and they'll swap back.

But for now, it's nice to see a bit of Aurora's past being proudly displayed.

One of the arguments for resurrecting the old flag is that it is relevant to the Town today.

Is it? Let's take a look.

The design consists of the Town's crest displayed against the blue and white of the St. Andrew's Cross.

Traditionally, this background represents Scotland. While the origins of our population may have had a leaning towards the northern part of the British Isles in the early 1800s, that's not as much the case today in increasingly multicultural Aurora.

So, like Scotland's recent attempts to separate itself from England, unless Aurora is planning a referendum suggesting it bail on York Region, I'm not sure how applicable that Cross element is today. Relevance: low.

The crest itself is very detailed and has a number of features. First is the Fleury plough. This originally represented industry and agriculture, and the large plough manufacturing plant in Town.

But the last plough rolled off the assembly line about a hundred years ago, and today, there's very little, if any farmland left within our borders. Probably a more representative object for the Town today would be a speed hump. Relevance: low.

In the background is a rising sun, representing the dawn. While today the sun is often hidden by the ever-present haze of construction dust, based on the Town being named after the goddess of the dawn, this one still is pretty applicable. Relevance: high.

Another curious feature on the crest is a series of three pyramids. Although as noted earlier, the Town's population is getting more diverse, I don't think the Egyptian or Mayan component is, or has ever been, particularly large.

So, unless while excavating for a cell tower in the east end of Town they've uncovered a 3,000 year old sphinx that they haven't told us about, I think the Egyptian relevance to today is a bit low.

The crest is surrounded by a series of maple leaves. This was a fortunate choice of species. If they'd gone with one of two other trees common at that time, the elm or ash, kids might wonder what type of leaves those are, as those tree populations have been decimated by Dutch Elm Disease and the Emerald ash borer. Fortuitous relevance: high.

Across the bottom of the crest is the Town's motto, ?Sol meus testis?, which means ?the sun is my witness?. Maybe that had meaning in the 1800s. Today, a more Aurora-appropriate motto would be one such as the Latin equivalent of ?get ready for the annual tax increase?, or ?water ban in effect?. Relevance: uncertain.

Sitting atop the shield is a royal-looking crown, again likely linking to our colonial roots. But, based on the continued pace of development around Town, I would suggest that more representative headgear these days would be a hard hat. Relevance: medium.

In the end, it seems that over the years there has been a significant decrease in the degree of relevance of the elements that make up Aurora's flag.

But it's nice to see a bit of our history flying again in Town. And since these individual features of the flag are so small you can't really see them from any distance, anyway, we won't quibble over the details.

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