

INSIDE AURORA: Frosty Farewell

By Scott Johnston

At the risk of offending Mother Nature, or El Nino, or Wiarton Willie, or whomever has control of the weather, now that the snow has melted off, I've had enough of winter, thank you, and am ready to start a new season.

We got off lightly in the winter of 2015/16, with minimal snowfall and warmer temperatures. It was more of a keep-an-umbrella-handy sort of time.

But the past few months more than made up for it, with lots of cold and snow in December, then after a brief January respite, more ice and snow in February.

It was picturesque and nostalgic having a white Christmas, but we're well past that.

It was never fun waiting for 8 cm of snow to fall before the Town started plowing the streets. Yes, we saved a few tax dollars, but it was difficult and dangerous driving in snow that deep.

And of course, 8 cm is when they started plowing the main roads. If you lived on some sort of side street, which, face it, most of us do, you had well beyond that level before a plow actually made a preliminary pass by, giving you the illusion of freedom of movement, if only you could get through the resulting 50 cm high compacted windrow at the end of your driveway.

I'm also looking forward to a having few more parking spaces at our local plazas. It's a cruel coincidence that December, the month that presents the most holiday-season-based challenges in finding a spot to put your car, is the month that Everest-high mountains of the white stuff start to take over the retail parking lots.

These spaces only start to be regained following the mid-March melt when, frankly, there isn't quite the rush for St Patrick's Day shopping.

Another benefit of the upcoming warmer season is that it will be nice to be able to walk our sidewalks without having a full cardio workout slogging through knee deep snow.

I'm not sure when it no longer became a requirement, but when I was younger, it was expected that when you shovelled your driveway, you also cleared the sidewalk in front of our house.

Nowadays, people seem to think the job is done when the driveway's clear, because the Town will take care of the sidewalks. Yes, in many cases they will ... eventually. But until then, your neighbours still want to walk to the local stores, reach the super mailbox, get to school or the park, jog, or walk the dog.

No wonder you have to swerve around so many more people trudging along our sideroads in winter. They're taking advantage of the track bare lanes.

Another thing I'm looking forward to is a reduction in the amount of salt and sand in my life. It accumulates on (and in) the car and as a result, in the garage. It coats and stains pants, and gets brought into the house on boots. It's truly pervasive.

True, I'd rather not take a header on an icy sidewalk, but do they have to use so much? I suppose a reduction in quantities would necessitate more prompt road clearing.

While normally that sounds unlikely, with luck maybe that will happen.

A bit of recent public backlash has raised the idea that in the 2017/18 snow clearing season the Town may go back to its previous standard of starting to plow at 5 cm, when not quite as much has fallen.

That may not help us if the weather turns over the next few weeks and we get one last March blast of the white stuff. But perhaps we can look forward to some easier winter travel next year.

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