

INSIDE AURORA: Happy Sesquidecennial!

By Scott Johnston

Fifteen years ago this week, the people of this Town discovered something new in their mailboxes; The Auroran.

Yes, this week our newspaper celebrates its 15th anniversary.

Looking at that first issue one can see that a lot in Aurora has changed, while much has stayed the same.

The first difference is that the newspaper came by mail. Distribution by carriers would follow later, and not because door to door delivery was being phased out by Canada Post.

Volume 1 number 1 stated that the Town's population was 41,000, which is about a thousand people a year less than what it is now, fifteen years later.

It was noted that it had been more than 20 years since there was a newspaper based in Town. That certainly changed that day.

The paper promised that the focus would be on Aurora, which was suggested through the caption "If it concerns Aurora, it concerns us." This pre-dated the current "Aurora's Community Newspaper", although both still apply.

According to the editor, efforts would be made to tell folks about events before they happened.

As is still the case today, the Town's history was much in focus, both through articles and photos.

Support was put forward for controlled growth to help maintain that small town feel. Through the paper, presumably in large part through the ads, people would be encouraged to support local businesses and shop locally.

There were certainly many ads from local stores, although a number of the ones featured in that issue are no longer around.

Interestingly, all of the contact phone numbers were seven digits, as dialing the extra three numbers of the area codes was not yet required.

Not surprisingly, with a municipal election looming, the lead story was about Council. While there were many names mentioned who are still familiar to us today, none of the 4 mayoral or 12 (yes, only 12) Councillor candidates is still active on Council.

The first issue didn't talk about the election issues, but they were pretty much what we hear each time: accountability, balanced development, and lower taxes.

Readers were encouraged to get out and vote, a nudge that seems required every election no matter what level of government. A few places in the news of that day are no longer with us. Wells Street School, which was actually a school back then and not lofts, had announced its annual Fall Fair.

Aurora Hydro was also a going concern, although there was foreshadowing that it could be swallowed up by a larger utility company.

Over on what were the quiet fields west of the 404, plans were announced for the new Canadian headquarters for State Farm. At least that one's still with us.

Sure to improve traffic through Town was the soon-to-be-completed widening of Yonge Street to five lanes from Murray to Dunning.

Other traffic-related news stories had a familiar ring to them; concern about speeding on local streets, but caution about implementing all of the recommendations due to the cost, the increasing price of snow removal, and the time it took to get the streets cleared in winter.

That first edition was only 8 smallish pages, but the newspaper promised to keep Aurorans informed, entertained, and connected to their community. And for 15 years, I think it has.

Thanks to Ron, for having that vision, and thanks to all of our readers who have supported The Auroran since then.

As for the next 15 years, I'll be hanging onto this week's edition of the paper, so let's reconvene here in 2030, and take a look at how things have changed.

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