

## INSIDE AURORA: Ho Ho No

**By Scott Johnston**

Take a look at your calendars, Aurorans, because it's that time of the year already.

No, not back to school, or Hoedown, or Thanksgiving, or Halloween, or even Remembrance Day.

It's Christmas.

The twenty plus degree temperatures, green leaves on the trees, and other factors, the least of which being that it is technically still summer, may suggest otherwise, but I know differently. That's because on August 22, a date now burned into my mind, I saw my first Christmas display in a store.

Not just one Christmas item, like a card or reindeer toy, in amongst others. But a full display of Christmas stuff. And although it was only a few weeks into August, for all I know it had been there for some time.

It's not unusual to see some evidence of the Christmas holidays at other times of the year, often in the form of a string of lights that a neighbour forgot to take down, and which look increasingly pathetic as bulbs are broken or disappear over the following months.

But this was different, an intentional four plus month early harbinger of times to come.

I wasn't really ready for it.

I had just started getting used to seeing Halloween candy on store shelves. With brilliant marketing insight, they don't label it as a Halloween item, despite the pumpkins and ghosts and other things on the displays. They have subtly turned this so that, at least the next few weeks, it's not a trick or treat item, but a back to school lunch essential.

My mom wasn't averse to us having the odd treat when I was growing up, but I can just imagine how she would have reacted if I had suggested then that boxes of candy be a key part of my back to school supplies.

But back to it being The Most Wonderful Time of the Year...

In case you thought the festive display I came across was an isolated incident, due perhaps to the store owner's calendar being defective and missing a few crucial late year months, my wife on a separate shopping trip that same week ran across a different store displaying a vast array of Christmas themed items.

We all know that retailers need all the help they can get in encouraging sales, and rely heavily on the coming time of year, and there was a mention in a recent Auroran column about someone who had already completed their Christmas shopping, but come on.

The CNE had barely started, and everyone was still wearing flipflops and swatting mosquitoes. It was hardly the time to be thinking of snowmen, tinsel and manger scenes. And as noted earlier, there are a few other significant times of the year to recognize first.

Some small amount of seasonal calendar creep is within reason. Christmas, at least retail-wise, is not limited to December, but has always started not long after Halloween wraps up. But it now appears that this is no longer a November-December holiday, but an August-September-October-November-December event.

It wouldn't surprise me if July gets tacked on next year.

If this is the trend, and annual events start becoming year-long events, so be it. With no way to fight this concept, I might as well embrace it. Perhaps now that it's September, I can start my Valentine's Day shopping.

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