

INSIDE AURORA: Identity Crisis

By Scott Johnston

It seems that Aurora is experiencing an identity crisis.

This observation stems from Councillor Thom's suggestion, noted in last week's Auroran, that the Town re-adopt flying its original cross of St Andrew's-based flag. It is thought that by promoting this, it will bring people closer to the Town and its history.

Actually, this is not the first time Aurora has demonstrated some degree of self-consciousness about its image.

Several years ago, it was thought that we needed a tagline. After much careful thought, we almost ended up with "Our Town, Your Future".

Sounds nice, but someone pointed out that it was basically the same as East Gwillimbury's existing motto of "Our Town, Our Future." Maybe they hoped no one would venture north of Green Lane and notice the similarity.

But they did, so no doubt after discounting other original ideas like "The Big Appel", "Hawgtown" and "The City of Lite", eventually we settled on "You're in Good Company." Whether that was the best choice, or whether kids can say it without snickering, is a debate for another day.

But I think that what we should have to better promote our Town is not a flag, a crest, or a motto, but something we don't have; a mascot.

One need go no further than our own local sports team to see how successful a mascot can be. Everyone across Canada associates our hockey team with the tiger, so there's no reason to think this wouldn't work equally well for our Town.

There is no end of ideas for something that would be appropriate for Aurora.

Animals are always popular mascots. Perhaps the trumpeter swan, a local species that was helped back from the edge of extinction in the 1970s by local environmentalist Harry Lumsden, and which can still be seen around Town.

Or, in a nod to global warming, the opossum, whose northern range now includes Aurora, and whose presence is being felt more every year, might be a good fit.

If we want to reach back into our past, we could use the Fleury plow, the production of which a hundred years ago put Aurora on the industrial map.

But with our local farmland disappearing quickly under development, maybe we need something a little more contemporary than a plow.

There's been much discussion and debate lately about the growing number of cell towers in Town. How about a cell tower mascot, or that perennial favourite on our roads, the construction pylon?

They would both make for fairly wearable shaped costumes for appearances at special events. Certainly more so than that other obvious local infrastructure choice, the speed hump.

Some places have mascots that are not animals or objects, but something more whimsical.

Our Town is shaped by politics, and nothing says local politics more than Aurora Council, so perhaps a nod to our elected officials.

I'm not sure exactly what they'd look like, but how about a character named "Robbie Report Back", "Peter Procrastinator" or "Lindsay Litigation"?

If the goal of this latest round of self-promotion is in part to encourage kids to become better connected to our Town, I think seeing, or even having a say in determining, a Town mascot, would be a lot more interesting to them than a 150-year-old crest on a flag.

Just saying.

As for subject matter, the ideas I've noted above just scratch the surface. With a Town as steeped in history as Aurora, the possibilities really are endless.

Do you have any suggestions? If so, I'd love to hear them.

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