

INSIDE AURORA: Indecision Town

By Scott Johnston

I'm not sure why, but Aurora seems to be getting less decisive as the years go by.

The key example of this is the status of the Hydro Funds, which are to be used for some exciting showcase project in town.

However, for many years the \$33 or so million in funding realized from the sale of that utility has sat in the bank (or maybe in someone's mattress ? it's accrued about as much interest as if it has been in one), awaiting a suitable project.

You'd think by now someone would have had that ?eureka? moment, and identified exactly what the funds should be used for, but interestingly, no idea has been forthcoming. Or at least, none that everyone could agree on.

This has happened despite much Council debate and other consultation on the matter. In fact, the last time taxpayers were asked about what to do with the money, the overwhelming response was ?give it back to us?.

Practical for the individual, but hardly generating a legacy project in town.

It's not like there haven't been a number of worthwhile projects both historical and proposed that could have used some financial support: construction of new baseball fields, covered tennis courts, and skateboard parks, buying the Armory or more parkland, redeveloping and encouraging business on Yonge Street, adding bike paths and pedestrian underpasses. But still the funding lies untouched.

Interestingly, even when the town does want to move forward on something, indecision again rears its head.

Look at all the angst and back and forth years ago that preceded the installation of traffic calming in the northeast quadrant.

But the town wanted it done properly, so although it took forever before a decision was made on what to put in, after much consultation, deep thought, and review of all the options (and a healthy payout of taxpayers' dollars), the perfect solution was arrived at.

At least, it was perfect until it was decided it actually wasn't, and all the chicanes were subsequently torn up and removed (at additional taxpayer expense, of course). Hopefully, they've been kept in storage in case it's decided to flip-flop one day and put them back in again.

I'm surprised someone hasn't suggested that this municipal indecision should be better reflected on our town crest, perhaps by replacing the Fleury plough with a waffle.

After all, wavering on the way to our final goals is not a recent occurrence in Aurora. Although a decision was finally made, I believe the almost 200 year old Petch House was only 120 years old when they first started discussion about whether to save it, and if so, in what form.

And most of the people enjoying the Seniors' Centre were probably kids when discussions began about our still unrealized new Youth Centre.

And it's not just ?projects? that lead our town down the pathway of indecision. Just look at the John West Way/Municipal Drive/John West Way street name shuffle, or all the waffling at council in recent years about codes of conduct and integrity commissioners.

Based on all this, what do you think the odds are that we'll see some decisive action on some of the current big ticket items being kicked around in town these days, such as development of library square, or the establishment of a historical block anchored by Hillary House?

Not good.

As for library square, if and whenever its redevelopment occurs, it would be nice if one of our local artisans was commissioned to create a commemorative sculpture to be placed on the site.

To celebrate the indecision that will likely be associated with finalizing this project, I suggest an appropriate subject for the statue would be someone flipping a coin.

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