

INSIDE AURORA: Kickstarting Discussion

By Scott Johnston

Now that the provincial election is over, everyone's attention in Town is now focused directly on the upcoming municipal election. It's all people are talking about.

Right?

Anyone?

Hello?

Okay, so there's a lot of apathy out there, which is the problem we now face.

There are important decisions to be made over the next few years, so it's vital that people be actively engaged in the election.

But no one's really interested.

There are a few reasons for this. After the provincial campaign, folks are kind of electioned out. As for the eventual municipal candidates, many have suggested a similar lack of enthusiasm by not yet throwing their hats in the ring, despite having had a number of months to decide.

Also, it's summer, and everyone's trying to enjoy the nice weather while they can.

But one of the big reasons for the general municipal election apathy is the less than inspiring issues, such as:

Councillors getting along and working together... we hear that every four years.

Reducing taxes ... everyone knows they can only go up.

Adopting a ward system ... but only if 25% more people vote than ever before, and most vote in favour, and a bunch of other required things that will never happen.

Reducing the number of councillors?. again, not gonna happen.

No, if people are going to get up from their comfy summer hammocks and pay attention, the municipal election needs to be kick-started with a big issue to get people talking. Something local. Something new.

Here are a few ideas.

The Chamber of Commerce needs a new venue for the Home Show, and Town properties are going unused, so how about converting Petch House into a Convention Centre? Despite all the money that's gone into it, it's still completely unusable without yet another cash infusion, so why not go all out?

We all love the mural at Yonge and Wellington, but the Canadian achievements theme has been up for a long time. Maybe it's time for a refresh. So what will it be; a salute to the coaches and volunteers that work with the Town's kids, famous moments in Council history, or something else? Let the discussions begin.

We've been told that \$15 billion in provincial funding is coming to the GTA for transit, so how about some of it being directed to Aurora? A subway under Wellington would fit the bill. It would get the Region off the hook for addressing the traffic chaos at Yonge, and while they're at it, they could put in a few much-needed trail connections under Wellington.

I don't know the figures, but I expect more than half of all the yard waste residents put out every two weeks consists of weeds.

Perhaps it's time to finally just give up and embrace the enemy, by designating Aurora as the ?Dandelion Capital of Canada?.

Despite initial discussions, the Fab Lab idea has not gotten any traction, so how about a push to get it going and at the same time revitalize the downtown core by building the world's largest particle accelerator under Library Square? While they're digging, maybe they could throw in a few extra underground parking spots, too.

I'm not saying these ideas are necessarily our first priorities, financially viable, or even realistically achievable, but at least it would spark some interesting debates.

And once people are engaged, maybe a sidebar discussion could begin on something we do need to talk about in Aurora, like planning or infrastructure.

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