

INSIDE AURORA: Pedestrian Observations

By Scott Johnston

We added a puppy to our family last summer.

Yes, she's terrific, and yes, we're exhausted. More on that in a future column.

But one of the advantages of having her around is that it has given us a chance to explore more of our neighbourhood, which has allowed me to observe a few things this winter.

The first is that there seem to have been a lot more Christmas (or ?seasonal?, if you prefer) decorations up than I remember seeing in previous years. That was certainly a nice diversion when spending great quantities of time roaming the streets on the bitterly cold dark nights, which seem to start at around 3.30 p.m. in December.

It was also entertaining to see the creativity of our residents. There was one house that had multitudes of lights that blinked in various sequences, choreographed to carols played over a loud speaker system.

I spoke to the owner one night and he confirmed he had spent quite a bit of time getting about a dozen different sets of bulbs set to come on and off with just the right timing. He was understandably proud.

Whether his neighbours, who were exposed to it for several hours a day for a month, appreciated it to the same degree, is another story.

On the subject of cold weather, while the white stuff has been rare this winter, we are fortunate to have the Town ensure that it is ploughed from our sidewalks so quickly.

However, one problem with this is that the snow clearing blades on the vehicles they use appear to be exactly the same width of our sidewalks. This sounds like a perfect situation, but it is only if the vehicle operator maintains a perfect alignment.

This can obviously be challenging on curvy bits of pavement buried under several centimetres of snow. Even going astray a short amount will result in great chunks of sod being ripped up from residents' lawns, and muddy tire tracks everywhere.

People obviously know this is coming.

In early December I noticed that a homeowner had pounded in several tall stakes along a curved piece of sidewalk outside their home. When I walked that way following our first snowfall, every one of them had been snapped into kindling, and the sidewalk was covered in mud and grass.

The lawn was a mess, but at least there was now some much-needed traction on that slippery stretch of the sidewalk.

Can the operators drive more carefully? Can the blades be made narrower? Can sidewalk edges be better defined?

I think the only solution to this is the arrival of spring.

Another thing I've noticed is that a social activity seen around the world seems to have come to Aurora; the placement of love locks.

This is a practice where a couple affixes a lock to a fence, as a permanent sign of their love, and then throws away the key. Or, I suppose, forgets the combination, if it's that type of lock.

Last year in Paris, the weight of locks attached to some bridges over the Seine got so extreme that authorities had to remove entire sections of fence for fear they would crash down onto the boats below.

I don't think we're likely to run into that sort of danger here in Aurora, as the locks I've seen haven't been on bridges, and apart from the Rotary Club's annual Frog Race in Tannery Creek, the traffic on our local rivers is pretty light.

But it's interesting to see us keeping up with worldwide trends.

As we get into warmer weather and more daylight, I'll be out exploring further areas of Town. I'm looking forward to some new discoveries.

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