

INSIDE AURORA: Reality Check-In

By Scott Johnston

"Good afternoon, and welcome to the new Hotel Aurora."

"Thank you," said the man who had just walked up to the check-in counter. "It's great that this town finally has a new hotel again after all these years."

"Yes, they just finished construction," smiled the clerk. "We've only been open a short while. Now, how may I help you?"

Putting his bag down, the man said, "I have a reservation under the name of Smith."

"Of course, Mr. Smith. Ah, here it is. We have one of our standard rooms ready for you. Four nights, was it?"

"Yes, thanks. And how much will that be?"

"Let's see," said the clerk, referring to his computer. "That will be \$600."

"That's about \$150 a night," said Mr. Smith, following a quick mental calculation. "That's not too bad."

"No, that's per night."

"Excuse me?"

"It's \$600 per night, so a total of \$2,400 for your stay," the clerk smiled again.

"That's preposterous! I just want a basic room. This is Aurora. The fancy downtown hotels don't even charge that much!"

"I'm sorry, sir, but those are our standard rates for Aurora."

"Why are they so high!?"

The clerk sighed. He'd had to explain this several times already to other guests.

"You see, normally our rates would be much lower. However, the local council here has imposed very high municipal development charges on new hotel space - we hear they're the highest in the GTA."

"Unfortunately, since it was extremely expensive to construct this hotel, we have had to adjust our room rates accordingly to recoup the cost. Even at these rates we're barely breaking even."

"Well, I'll just go elsewhere then," said Mr. Smith, bending down to pick up his bag.

"I'm afraid you'll find we're the only hotel in town, sir. Despite the demand for rooms and the demonstrated interest in the private sector to build more accommodation here, no other hotel chain has been able to afford to do so."

"I've had a long drive," said Mr. Smith, stretching his aching back, "and I don't want to go traipsing all over York Region trying to find another hotel. Can I at least get a cheaper room?"

"That is our lowest priced room. However," he looked around the lobby conspiratorially, "while we don't advertise it, based on the sort of feedback we've been receiving from our guests since we opened, we have set up a special budget option I can offer you at \$200 a night."

"That's better," said Mr. Smith, perking up considerably. "I'll take that, and wait a minute," he said with suspicion. "If it's cheaper than the lowest price room, what exactly is it?"

"We set you up in a tent outside on the grass between the parking lot and Highway 404."

Sensing some hesitation, the hotelier continued; "It's a very nice spot overlooking the off ramp. The traffic sounds are very soothing, and you'll get lots of fresh air."

Mr. Smith thought for a minute, then sighed.

"Well, if you're the only place in town, then I guess I don't have many options."

"Excellent, but that rate is for a larger tent that you would share with up to three other guests. If you want your own tent, it will be an additional \$25 a night."

Resigning himself to the new reality of hotel accommodation in Aurora, Mr. Smith reached for his wallet to place his deposit on the single tent option.

He was just glad it wasn't winter.

Feel free to e-mail Scott at: machellscorners@gmail.com