

INSIDE AURORA: The Transformation

By Scott Johnston

At the stroke of midnight on November 1st this year the Town of Aurora was magically transformed.

It was not the first snowfall of the season, or the daylight savings time change, or even when the last election sign was taken down. No, in a period of time which happens so quickly science has yet to accurately measure it, the local shops put up all their Christmas decorations and unpacked all their seasonal merchandise.

When most children were probably still bouncing off of the walls on a sugary high from the previous evening's Hallowe'en candy, an army of retail staff assembled artificial trees, hung lights, plugged in mechanical reindeer, filled shelves, and festooned their shops with all sorts of festive and wondrous things.

And it was all completed before the stores opened that morning.

This overnight transformation was not limited to individual shops. On November 1 this year our local mall was playing Christmas carols over the speaker system.

That weekend on TV the commercial blitz began, and there were no less than eight Christmas specials and movies. And the newspapers were stuffed with fliers and catalogues encouraging the annual ramp up in consumption.

The fall and Halloween displays that we had been seeing all October leading up to the 31st were so yesterday ? literally.

I suppose the fact that merchants held off until November 1 before initiating this complete transformation was a bit of a blessing. I did see some Christmas merchandise in one local store as far back as early September. It may actually have been out earlier, but that's when I noticed it.

I don't begrudge the retailers' enthusiasm for this time of year. They are all having a hard time, what with the challenging economy and loss of sales to the internet and other forms of e-commerce. Their desire to begin their busiest time of year, and entice us inside and spend as soon as possible is completely understandable.

However, while it's not as long as the recent 10 month municipal election campaign, and while I do enjoy the Christmas season, what I'd prefer is for all this in-your-face consumerism to be delayed until after Remembrance Day.

In early November it would be nice if we were seeing more of the red and black of poppies, and less of the red and green of the December season.

After all, Remembrance Day is becoming increasingly important to Canadians. The continuing increase in poppy sales, and the huge turnout of all generations at the cenotaph this year are testaments to how important this day is for Aurorans and all Canadians.

In the week or so after Halloween, we should all have in our thoughts and hearts those men and women who have given so much for our country over the years. This is especially true given the shocking events of the past month on our soil.

But it's hard to focus on this when rampant Christmas consumerism is coming at you from every angle.

So, as a sign of respect it would be nice if the ads and sales pitches were toned down a bit up to November 11th.

Surely the following six weeks is enough time for retailers and other parties to assault our senses and fill their coffers. It's not as if we all won't be spending more than we intended, like we do every year, anyway.

While it's unlikely this commercial pause until after Remembrance Day will ever happen, I can always hope. After all, that's what Christmas miracles are all about.

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