

Santa hopes to make a musical splash at this Saturday's parade



By Brock Weir

Local school bands, community groups, and local businesses are now putting the finishing touches on their floats and vehicles ahead of this Saturday's annual Santa Under The Stars Parade.

Set to get underway at 6 p.m. at Orchard Heights Drive, the Parade will wind its way down Yonge Street south to Murray Drive, wowing thousands of people lining the route.

As Santa himself gets ready for the big day, he called *The Auroran* from the North Pole to discuss his excitement on returning to Aurora once again ? and offers a few tips on how you and your brothers and sisters can stay on the ?nice? list this Christmas.

Auroran: Are you excited to be heading back to Aurora once again?

Santa Claus: Aurora is always a special experience. I don't know if you're aware, but Aurora was one of the very first municipalities that ever made a nighttime parade and brought the lights out. You must imagine that living in the North Pole with many dark evenings, lights tend to be one of my favourite things!

I first took part in an Aurora parade in the 1870s and the naughty list keeps getting shorter in Aurora, believe it or not, and there has, of course, been an increase in the number of children young and old! The children I saw 30 years ago on Yonge Street at the exact same parade I'm now seeing them holding their children. That is always really rewarding.

I really tend to get caught up in seeing the number of kids who are now parents. I quite often see their eyes in their children and it is almost like their parents looking back at me.

Auroran: What do you do to get in the zone when you're waiting for the parade to start at Orchard Heights?

Santa: I like to do stretches because they are very important whether I am preparing for Christmas Eve or sitting in a parade. I always want to make sure that I can wave big and high so that the kids can see me because my sleigh is very high off the ground. I want to make sure I have the ability to reach over and have eye contact with as many kids and as many parents as possible.

Auroran: Will you be collecting letters to take back with you to the North Pole?

Santa: I wanted to make sure no children's letters got missed, so I made a request for Canada Post to go out before the parade actually starts because I don't want a child to be so excited about the parade and what they are seeing that they forget to reach into their picket and hand in their letter.

Auroran: Have parade organizers let you in on any little surprises that might be in this year's parade?

Santa: The organizers always tell me Aurora is full of such great kids, but that is all I usually seem to get out of them. But this year [organizer] Shelley Ware tipped me off Cardinal Carter's marching band this year is going to be the biggest band they have ever had

in Aurora. For a high school marching band just starting out, that is phenomenal! Once I heard about that, I did place a request that they be the band leading right before me, so we'll have to wait and see if the organizer can make that happen!

Auroran: Fingers Crossed! Has your sleigh had its winter tracks put on?

Santa: I'm always so busy this season, so technically I am not the one who works on my sleigh, but I always ask the elves that put it together to ensure it is as clean and bright as possible because I would never want to disappoint any child in Aurora. Of course, Mrs. Claus does have that special decoration touch, where I am more of a logistics guy like how many kilometers I can cover and the physics behind it.

Auroran: What do you do to unwind after the parade?

Santa: My favourite drink of ? well, I have two favourite drinks of all time. Definitely in the month of December, I tend to favour eggnog but hot chocolate tends to be my drink of choice year-round. It really is a toss-up, but I am definitely going to need something warm to drink!

Auroran: What advice do you have for kids so they stay on the nice list?

Santa: To follow their hearts and to follow their instincts when making choices because if something doesn't feel right, it is often not right. But when something feels good, take stock in what you did to repeat that. And remember, it is not the number of lights on your tree that matters, but the number of family members you have to look at the tree.