

## Santa Parade offers new accessibility options for residents in need

With space at a premium along Yonge Street for next Saturday's Santa Under the Stars parade, practicing social distancing might be a challenge and wearing a mask will remain the norm, but for residents who are unable to wear a mask due to physical or medical reasons, the Town of Aurora has come up with a solution.

The Town has partnered with a business along the parade route to transform a parking lot into a reserved space to make sure families with youngsters and the young-at-heart who are part of this group don't miss out on the fun.

For those who have accessibility issues, watching the parade can be a challenge, says Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora. It can be a challenge finding the right spot and some of the people with accessibility concerns might not be vaccinated or be able to wear masks in public. With the anticipated attendance at this event, physical distancing likely won't be possible so, for the first time, we are piloting an accessible space which will be reserved and registered so families with accessibility concerns can, with greater comfort and safety, be able to view the parade without any additional worries.

Families will be able to pull right into the space. They can choose to stay in their cars right until the last minute if they want, but they will have designated pod seating which will be two metres from the next family. The whole area will be cordoned off and there will be a staff person in the lot with registered names so they can guarantee that space. Families that maybe aren't vaccinated or have a host of challenges they have to go through in order to attend a parade, hopefully that will ease some concerns.

If this pilot works in this location, we will be able to fine-tune it, work out any kinks, and have it become a part of our pattern moving forward for future parades and maybe we can have more of these accessible areas.

To register for a spot in this accessible area, email Shelley Ware at [sware@aurora.ca](mailto:sware@aurora.ca).

Families who successfully register will receive the location details.

**By Brock Weir** Editor/Local Journalism Initiative Reporter