

Santa's looking forward to seeing bright Aurora faces at this Saturday's Parade



By Brock Weir

Here Comes Santa Claus ? and he's looking forward to seeing your smiling, sparkling faces as he makes his way down Yonge Street this Saturday in Aurora's annual Santa Under the Stars Parade.

Getting underway at 6 p.m. at Orchard Heights, moving south down Yonge Street to Murray Drive, Santa is getting into the zone with some strenuous yoga and his all-important cookie diet before the big day, which will see the nighttime parade grow by more than 20 per cent.

For the second time, Santa Claus has granted The Auroran an exclusive telephone interview from the North Pole as Mrs. Claus spruces up the sleigh and the man himself gets his reindeer ready for prime time.

Brock Weir: Thank you for speaking to us once again. What's on your wishlist for this year's parade?

Santa Claus: I want to see as many lights as possible, that way I can see the true sparkle in all the kids lining the street because that sparkle also reaffirms that they should be on the Nice List. I would also like to see as many shops and eateries open along Yonge Street because I really love the downtown core and want to ensure people who come down to the parade can go into those stores and eateries to see what they have to offer.

BW: What's the buzz up in the North Poll on what Aurora has in store for you?

SC: It is such a busy season, so I really let my wife handle a lot of the bookings and the logistics, and she has kept me up to speed. I understand though the parade is going to be starting out with a really great opening, with the Mayor and Town Councillors. I hear they have really undertaken to build a gorgeous float this year! I also understand this year the parade has grown by 20 per cent. That means there will be a couple of more marching bands leading the way for me. As well, we have some additional floats. There are a lot of new participants that I don't recognize being in the parade before, so this is going to be really new for me as well!

BW: Last year you had a new opening act with the Cardinal Carter Marching Band leading you down Yonge Street for the first time. Have they let you in on who gets the honours this year?

SC: Now that is exciting! I am so happy it is going to be Cardinal Carter again. This will be their second year in the parade and there will be more than 40 students in the marching band. I just love seeing the kids that I visited in their house many years ago, now they are at the youth age and they are the ones marching and creating all the excitement as I pull in. That is just really cool how it has worked out.

BW: And if I remember correctly, you made the special request for Cardinal Carter yourself last year.

SC: And they rose to the challenge! That takes a lot of work, and you can imagine how hard they have worked throughout the year to get ready for Saturday night.

BW: Have you made any musical requests?

SC: Of course! There is always going to be Here Comes Santa Claus!

BW: Don't you ever get tired of hearing that one?

SC: Never! Never! Do you ever get tired of people chanting your name?

BW: That so rarely happens?

SC: I can feel their excitement when they call out my name!

BW: Is that why you keep coming back to Aurora?

SC: I am very, very excited to be a part of this parade. I know with the way the Aurora spirit is, they are excited too ? but it is really, really important that everybody who comes to the parade remembers that the Salvation Army will be out collecting food donations for their mission, and if every single person along that parade route brought one non-perishable food item, it will just make ensuring that every family in Aurora has a Christmas that much more achievable. I totally get with the excitement when you're running out of the house and you're waiting to go down to the parade route it is easy to forget that piece, so I recommend that people pack their non-perishable food items even the night before, or tuck a can of food in your coat pocket when you are walking to the parade so it doesn't get forgotten because that is really, really important. The Salvation Army is going to be out at the very beginning of the parade and they will be servicing both sides of the road collecting all of the donations from them.

BW: I also hear you'll have helpers on the ground from Canada Post picking up letters to you from the kids.

SC: I love seeing how each child's requests have evolved over the years. When they are young sometimes they focus on the toys but as they get older their requests change and start to be for other people and other things. It really is a season about receiving, but more so about giving. I do keep the letters, just like I have kept all the letters you have written to me over the years.

BW: But I'm not sure my handwriting has improved at all! What will you be doing this Saturday to get into the zone?

SC: Well, truth be told, sometimes I need a nap, but other times I do some yoga stretches and that type of thing just to get into the mood. But, I also need to carve out some time because I always like to eat good batch of cookies, which the Town of Aurora always gives me before I go out. It's a little bit low key, but when there are a few spare moments I keep writing back to all those letters I have received. Once I'm through I just feel Aurora's energy. It just motivates me to do an all-nighter. I call back up to the North Pole, I make sure the production has picked up, and because I am so pumped up from the excitement, it is not uncommon for me to stay up all night long responding to letters and looking back on the faces I saw.

So, will you be one of the faces Santa sees along Yonge Street? Don't disappoint him. Santa confides to us that if the reindeer really do an ?amazing? job in the parade this year, he will bring them back to Aurora on Wednesday, December 7, for the Town's annual Tree Lighting Ceremony at Town Hall, which gets underway at 6.30 p.m. If the reindeer stay on the nice list, you will get a chance to meet them in person that night inside historic Petch House.

Keep your fingers crossed!