

## Santa's looking forward to seeing the 'spirit of Aurora' on Saturday

By Brock Weir

Finish off those letters to the jolly man in red ? Santa's coming to Aurora this Saturday and he's looking forward to hearing from you!

Santa Claus is polishing up his sleigh and putting his reindeer through some last minute exercises before their weekend flight to Aurora where they will make their way down Yonge Street under the night sky for the annual Santa Under the Stars Parade. The annual festive favourite gets underway at Orchard Heights Drive at 6 p.m., moving south to Murray Drive by 8 p.m. Featuring elaborate floats and toe-tapping marching bands ? and even some hot chocolate served up by the Aurora Historical Society from the veranda of Hillary House ? there is plenty of buzz in the air and, in a telephone interview with The Auroran on Thursday, Santa shared his excitement.

Brock Weir: What keeps you excited year after year?

Santa Claus: The spirit of Aurora is what brings me back. Aurora is one of the few municipalities that turned on the lights for a night time parade and back well over 20 years ago people thought it was a crazy idea! Why wouldn't you have a daytime parade? It is always a special moment to go back where the magic started because night time parades are now very common, but they also add such an extra magical element ? and it is all about the magic!

BW: What are you doing to get everyone prepared for the parade?

SC: The reindeer have a very strict training exercise, but I have to slow it down a little bit because now they are getting prepared for the busy season. They have been training up until now and their only free time is when they get to do a few reindeer games. You want them to be quick thinkers and be able to stay sharp.

BW: You have developed a very special relationship with the Town of Aurora over the years. Have they given you any special sneak peeks at what to expect in this year's parade?

SC: No sneak peeks! (laughs) There haven't been any sneak peeks, but I am told the parade is a little bit longer than normal because there was a really big interest from the community participating, so I would like to think the people who want to be in the parade are on my good list ? but maybe they just want to be in the parade leading the way for me! Personally, I will be making a special effort to see Hillary House's float. I have heard it is going to be a really big attraction and the volunteers are working tirelessly to make it happen.

BW: Who else made your naughty and nice list?

SC: I don't think I can actually reveal names because that might not be the nice way to go about it, but I can say with the spirit of Aurora, and all the great things that happened this year celebrating Canada's 150, my nice list has swelled bigger than normal ? which is why we're having to work feverishly hard to meet the high demand.

BW: Fine, you won't name names, but what can people do to better their chances to make the nice list?

SC: If you can spare food donations or toy donations, or even bring me letters, I am very fortunate the Salvation Army will be collecting food and toys for other people. If you can spare those items from your household, please consider giving back and giving at the beginning of the parade route as it goes by you. The Salvation Army volunteers are getting prepared, so I would like to see them run off their feet in terms of collecting food and toy donations!

BW: Aurora has grown a little bit since you were last here on December 25. What would you say to the newbies who might be coming out to see you at the Parade for the first time?

SC: Just come out so I can see you in the community and see the smiles on your faces. They should be very happy they have chosen Aurora as their community. It is certainly one I look forward to visiting time and time again, so I really look forward to them taking advantage of the generosity of the Town, the volunteers making the parade possible ? and that I can come and be a guest for that evening is fantastic. I hope to see everybody along the parade route!