

BROCK'S BANTER: Conversation Pieces

By Brock Weir

The oven has cooled off, the turkeys have been unstuffed and the people that, in turn, stuffed themselves over the weekend are now fighting off their traditional post-Thanksgiving turkey hangover.

Whatever you did to celebrate the annual holiday, I hope you're getting back down to business with full hearts and clear heads for the last quarter in 2013.

Talk around our particular Thanksgiving table ultimately and inevitably turns to politics. Rather, I should say that's the way the conversation swings for about half of us midway through the dinner while the other half rolls their eyes and talks amongst themselves.

Being that this year's family gathering was held at my aunt's place in the Etobicoke-Lakeshore riding, there was no shortage of things to talk about, ranging from the latest on Mayor Rob Ford, to their own new MPP Doug Holyday. When they asked me what was happening up in our neck of the woods, I was at a loss at what to say.

Should I tell them about the hours and hours (and hours) of Council time devoted to just three trees in a southeast Aurora neighbourhood? On the one hand, they might have been intrigued by the seemingly mundane things that arouse passions north of the 401. But, on the other, they probably wouldn't have believed it.

Perhaps better family fodder could be found in the hullabaloo over whether Council should spend \$3,000 to sponsor a dinner honouring local sports heroes at the very first induction ceremony for the Aurora Sport Hall of Fame. There were plenty of sports fans around the table, so this might have provided some lively conversation, but it probably wasn't enough to rouse the fire that typically comes with our table talk.

Would discussions over Councillors suddenly pondering even after a very healthy discussion the previous week whether a Councillor and a Staff Member on the Hall of Fame's Board of Directors somehow had a conflict over the decision? How about the dramatic turn that debate took towards the end of the evening when the Councillor in question offered to resign from the board right then and there to get that coveted vote that would have turned the tide?

To take things into perspective, this might seem like Child's Play although no less silly than Toronto's current woes, so I opted to bite my tongue. However, wondering if there would be any way to compress all these issues in a nice digestible package for the Thanksgiving crowd, it occurred to me that if this could be considered a silly season, things are only going to get sillier from here on out.

FASTEN YOUR SEATBELT: SPECTACLE IMMINENT!

After particularly lengthy Council meetings, such as the one last week where two hours were devoted to the infamous trees, I'm often asked how I can stand sitting through such meetings. The canned answer is that it's my job, but to be truthful, being there is essential to appreciate and get the flavour of the full spectacle.

Last week had this spectacle in spades. If you weren't in the room, you might have missed the chance to see who was clapping for whom; audience members swaying in apparent ecstasy that would not have been out of place in those most demonstrative of revival meetings; lawyers jogging down to the floor in the midst of a Council debate for an impromptu tete-a-tete (or two) with the Town's solicitor; a local environmentalist unwittingly finding herself in the middle of Council crossfire as Mayor and Council debated whether to give her extra time for her presentation (time which she was already resigned to not getting) while stuck at the podium as they jockeyed to bring that vote in for a landing.

The previous week, there was extensive debate surrounding the adoption of Aurora's proposed new tree bylaw. A good time was apparently had by all at the Council table with members waggling the shame card at misheard remarks and supposed exclusive meetings which were, in reality, publicised to all and sundry, feigned shock and dismay, and on and on it goes.

In just a little under two weeks, it will be exactly a year until voters make their decisions on who will fill the Mayor and Council seats for the 2014-2018 Council term. In the meantime, there are plenty of political points to score. If that is the case, spectacles will inevitably be close at hand.

Indeed, as these dates get closer, it only seems to exacerbate a growing problem.

Just a few short months ago, I would have said such spectacle is limited primarily to Council meetings themselves when the cameras

are rolling, beaming the meetings into potentially every Aurora home presently subscribed to Rogers, not to mention those looking to get their municipal fix online. That, however, cannot be said today.

Would last Tuesday's decision to nix staff's authority to cut down the three trees on Longthorpe been different if there wasn't a good chunk of potential voters in there, a sea of humanity acting as a living, breathing applause-o-meter, giving them instant feedback on their comments and positions?

Maybe, maybe not, but fasten your seatbelts anyway ? it's going to be a bumpy year.