

BROCK'S BANTER: Crystal Balls

What is the opposite of a crystal ball?

By Brock Weir

In the future I need to be more cautious about what I write in this space.

After all, if I had the chance to don the genuine imitation Carnac the Magnificent turban which was so tempting to purchase on eBay recently, and predict hullabaloo to come at the Council table, it is most likely the surest sign that the precise opposite will take place.

Then there are the unfortunate souls that I happen to mention here. After all, the merest mention of people above a certain age in this space seem to have a tendency to nudge them along in meeting their maker. My sincere apologies to Conrad Bain, Florence Murray and the recently deceased Ada Johnson.

This coincidence has been in the back of my mind very recently, so much so that just before we went to press last week, I removed a reference to a 'memorial park' in honour of a certain individual so as to not tempt fate.

Therefore, with this in mind, I feel marginally responsible for the circus that unfolded at last week's Council meeting.

In last week's installment, I wrote about the admirable 'if not somewhat over-the-top' reactions to Margaret Thatcher's death as an indication of civic involvement and bemoaned the difficulties of finding something 'anything' to generate a desire for people to get involved and raise their voices here at home.

Lo and behold, the fates delivered.

The greatest number of people seen in the Council Chamber since the Great Cultural Centre Fiasco of 2012, slowly but surely filed in not 24 hours after we went to press. They were, of course, on hand to raise their voices, complain, and take Council to task for the large cell phone tower in King Township looming over their neighbourhood.

Whether or not they are justified in their concerns is a topic for a different day, but while one can be glad something has galvanized at least one 'albeit limited' section of the community, if this was their first foray wading into the world of municipal politics, it is doubtful that what transpired will make them devotees of public engagement.

'We're mad as hell and we're not going to take it anymore,' said Councillor John Abel, co-opting the late Peter Finch's iconic line from the 1976 film, *Network*, in reference to what the residents in attendance and indeed some Councillors were feeling in the very room.

This was evident as hoots, hollers, cheers and applause rang out depending on which side of the fence in the Bell Communications Debate each Councillor decided to plant themselves on over the future of the tower and just what Aurora 'rather than King' can do about it. Whatever school of thought the people in the audience subscribed to, everyone had at least one Councillor to root for, Band-Aid solutions were offered, but stepping back there seems to be no win-win situation in this matter.

If Council ultimately decides to seek an injunction this week, it will leave the vast majority of the people in the chamber feeling satisfied their voices were heard, and perhaps some of them will be inspired to keep active to ensure their voices continue to be heard. Flip the coin, some will inevitably feel alienated that Council decided to go through with this costing upwards of \$100,000 of taxpayers' dollars for what they have been advised will ultimately be a futile process.

If Council chooses any other course of action, these people will come away with the feeling of being voiceless. For some, this will be a lasting feeling, but for others, it will be a catalyst to get involved to change the process, make electoral hay out of the issue,

ensure it is a platform plank for many a candidate by the time the 2014 Election truly rolls around (although there's no doubt it is already well underway), and do everything they can to back the horse best representing them.

GRAND OLE DUKE OF ED

As you can see from Page 3 this week, our very own Queen's York Rangers took part in a historic parade through Downtown Toronto Saturday morning and through the afternoon to commemorate the Bicentennial of the Battle of York, one of the decisive battles of the War of 1812. The Rangers already had their proud roots well established before that skirmish, but the pride was evident on their faces as they marched down University Avenue along with several other regiments bound for Fort York.

Adding to the history of the event was the presence of the 91-year-old Duke of Edinburgh, who started the day presenting new regimental colours to a battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment.

As someone who has always been a champion of the unsung efforts and contributions of the Queen's valiant consort, I can't say it wasn't with some pride that I observed him taking an active part in the celebrations, he too appearing to be proud wearing his long overdue Order of Canada, which was presented to him by the Governor General the previous evening for his contributions to our nation, and the very warm reception he received from the crowds ? young and old alike.

From the enthusiasm he displayed, one got the impression that even as a nonagenarian the feeling was