

INSIDE AURORA: Going to Extremes

By Scott Johnston

A few weeks ago, there were reports that Council was concerned about the potential for flooding in Aurora. Was Aurora ready, or would the next heavy rain turn all our basements into indoor swimming pools? Before people could say, "surely, there must be more important things for our elected officials to fixate on," we got hit with the incredible ice and rain storm over the weekend, which resulted in power outages, downed trees, and yes, flooding. Maybe our Council members should consider giving up their day jobs and going into the weather forecasting business. Since this possibility had already been considered, it just goes to show that the events of last week-end are not an isolated incident. With climate change making itself evident in so many ways, there are expected to be severe weather conditions throughout the year, including, at least during the warmer weather, rainfall. Most of the time, our creeks look pretty harmless. There are many places where on an average day you could cross the tranquilly flowing and shallow Tannery Creek or Holland River without really getting your feet wet. But it doesn't take much to turn these waterways into raging torrents of power and erosion. Look at the flooding on Wellington just west of Yonge during a rainstorm last year. A video clip of a frightened family driving through the deep water became a YouTube sensation. To prevent these types of occurrences the Town, working with the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority and other partners with a vested interest, has put into place various measures to mitigate these impacts. Flood control dams, stormwater ponds, contoured landscaping for proper drainage, and clearing catch basins all contribute to softening the watery blow of extreme rain events. But these traditional approaches don't seem to be keeping up with the increasing occurrences. Perhaps it's time to start thinking of some more innovative new tactics. Ideally, we could just rise above it all, so to speak, but raising all of the buildings in Town up on stilts may be a bit impractical, even if it would sure help with much needed parking space downtown. The Town could issue everyone with umbrellas and hip waders. At about \$100 a person, that's still cheaper than some Council initiatives, although it wouldn't win Aurora any awards for fashion. With our rivers receiving flow from neighbouring King and Whitchurch-Stouffville before draining north through Town, we could build huge dams on our borders at Bathurst and Highway 404, and let those communities deal with all the water. Alternately, it would be great if we could put the volumes of water that come with a torrential rainfall to use, rather than let it all drain away. I for one, am getting really tired of our endless summer water bans. If we could just collect and store it somehow?. is it too late to consider building a 50 story water tower at Library Square? Or perhaps when the skies threaten we should all just play it safe and proactively head to higher ground, the highest of which in Aurora appears to be somewhere near Aspen Leaf Court in the northwest part of Town. There may not be much space there, so you'd be advised to arrive early. I'll be the one wearing the hip waders.

Feel free to e-mail Scott at: machellscorners@gmail.com