

INSIDE AURORA: Sign of the Times

By Scott Johnston

We had a candidate for Council at our door last weekend.

Actually, this was a bit newsworthy in that to my knowledge, this is the first candidate to drop by our house since the 2006 election. I guess we're a bit off the beaten path.

Or maybe they've been scared off by our dog, who we've specially trained to bark ferociously whenever local politicians are in the vicinity.

Just kidding..

In any case, our recent visitor was the first real hint that the election is underway. Apart from the candidate articles that have been appearing each week in the paper (and is it just me, or do the candidates all sound eerily the same?), there hasn't been much going on otherwise on the election front.

No debates. Not many ads. It's been radio silence.

The most visible feature that shows an election is in full swing is the election sign. But with both Regional and Town bylaws restricting their placement until 28 days prior to the election, I guess we won't be seeing them until next week.

Timing isn't the only thing about election signs that these bylaws restrict. As has been demonstrated by all the recent angst over the Town's sign bylaws, the world of local signage is full of rules and regulations, including those governing election signs.

For example, a sign can be no larger than 1.2 metres in dimension, cannot be placed within 7.5 metres of a traffic light, and there can only be one on each private property.

One location where election signs seem to mushroom up uncontrollably is at intersections, although that may be more due to the large number of candidates than to overzealous individual campaigners.

But even at intersections there are limits as to how many one can place at them.

For 37 specific intersections in Town (yes, they're each spelled out in the bylaw, and no, I'm not going to list them here, although it would be a great way of quickly reaching my word count for this column), there can be no more than two signs per candidate, and only one on any one corner.

One location that is completely restricted according to the Region is Yonge and Wellington. At the most significant intersection in Town, and the one where people probably spend the most time looking around while stuck idling in their cars waiting for the light to change, or for the 23 cars ahead of them to turn left, no signs are allowed at all due to various setbacks associated with bus shelters, driveways, hydrants, curbs and the intersection itself.

Perhaps the most interesting directions noted in the bylaws are the ones about installing signs. The Town suggests they only be installed between 9.30 am and 3.30 pm. The Region says people installing signs should wear reflective vests and safety footwear. And what is the danger of running afoul of these bylaws? For those who dare to put up a sign larger than 1.2 metres, or at Yonge and Wellington, or within 7.5 metres of a traffic light, they risk the full wrath of the Town or Region in the form of ? confiscation of the offending sign, which they can get back after the election.

For those who don't have signs removed by the local levels of government prior to October 22, they have 72 hours to do so after the election, by which time they should all be gone.

That's a good thing, because Halloween's the next week, and it's scary enough without that visual reminder of who will be looking out for our interests in Town for the next four years.

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