

VIEW FROM QUEEN'S PARK: Aurora business growing

By Chris Ballard, MPP
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Prime Data has been based in Aurora for over 20 years. Last week the firm opened its new, expanded location on Industrial Parkway North in Aurora. Prime Data, owned by well-known Auroran Steve Falk, employs approximately 40 local folks and is a supporter of many events and causes in Aurora. Prime Data state-of-the-art services includes direct mail planning and material for business, government and charities.

Goodbye to Southlake CEO Dr. Dave Williams

Southlake Regional Health Centre is a great facility with great staff, offering exceptional service to our community.

While it takes a strong team to build a great hospital, it takes an exceptional leader to pull that team together and provide direction. That leader ? Canadian astronaut and physician Dr. Dave Williams ? has been President and CEO of Southlake Regional Health Centre for a number of years. As he retires, I want to thank him personally for his leadership and vision that has continued to build a wonderful, world-class facility. It's a facility that touches thousands of lives each year.

Dr. Williams has never been one to rest on status quo. He has encouraged staff to look at new ways of running the hospital and delivering ?shockingly excellent experiences? to patients. ?Shockingly excellent experiences? is the hospital's vision, achieved through a culture of listening and learning. He has attracted excellent talent at both the front line and in administration.

On my many tours of the hospital with Dr. Williams, I was impressed with his ability to chat with everyone he met, be it patient, nurse, doctor, custodian, or clerk. There was an air of authenticity in these conversations that showed they weren't staged for my benefit. And it wasn't beneath him to pick up litter and hold open doors for staff and patients as we walked the halls.

Dr. Williams joined the Canadian Space Agency in 1992 and made two flights on the Space Shuttle, in 1998 and 2007. He logged more than 687 hours in space during his career, with a record-setting 17 hours and 47 minutes performing spacewalks, including installation work at the International Space Station.

Having also lived and worked in the world's only underwater ocean laboratory, he became Canada's first dual astronaut and aquanaut in 2001.

In one of our first conversations, I commented on how his job must be filled with stress. Dr. Williams, always a calm and reassuring figure, replied that, as an astronaut, he learned real stress is when you hear ?oh, oh!? ? and you're in space. Everything down here is manageable.

I understand Dr. William's replacement has been selected, but not publicly announced. I look forward to working with that individual, and the entire hospital team, to assist in anyway I can to help them continue to deliver ?shocking excellent experiences.?. Thanks, Dr. Williams. Enjoy your retirement.

Distracted driving and tough new penalties

Last week the province announced plans to soon introduce new legislation that, if passed, would help protect pedestrians and cyclists and reduce the number of people killed or injured by impaired, distracted and dangerous drivers. Ontario plans to crack down on careless and distracted driving with tough new rules and penalties that would help improve road safety and keep the most vulnerable road users - including pedestrians and cyclists - safer.

These new measures are imperative to keeping our roads safe. On average, one person is killed on Ontario's roads every 17 hours. In 2014, pedestrians and cyclists made up approximately 25 per cent of Ontario's road fatalities.

While drunk driving remains in the top-five killers on Ontario's roads, the province's most recent roadside survey found the rate of drivers who tested positive for drugs was more than twice the number who tested positive for alcohol.

The province is also consulting on the use of cameras on school buses that capture the offense of illegally passing a school bus when it is stopped and its lights are flashing. For the past 16 years, Ontario's roads have been ranked either the first or second safest in North America, but more can still be done. These strong measures add to recently announced new penalties for those who drive under the influence of drugs, including cannabis.

Congratulations Jackie

I want to congratulate my friend Jackie Playter, who was just named Newmarket's Honourary Citizen. Jackie is well known in

Newmarket and Aurora for her work in many philanthropic endeavours, most recently fundraising for the Margaret Bain Palliative Centre. The Centre will serve the needs of York Region and is located near Southlake Health Centre in Newmarket. People like Jackie ? and there are many ? make our community great. Thank you, Jackie.

As always, I invite you to contact me on any issue. Please call my community office at 905-750-0019, or visit my website at www.ChrisBallardMPP.ca. My email is: cballard.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org. I look forward to hearing from you.