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Jeff Thom sought to bring more youthful voice, perspective to Council table



By Brock Weir

Four years ago, Jeff Thom threw his hat into the political ring to lend a fresh, more youthful voice to municipal affairs. Four years later, he leaves politics to be able to spend more time with his wife Kaelyn and two daughters Evelyn, two, and Anna, three weeks. Indeed, a lot can happen in four short years but looking back on the days he just wrapped sitting at the Council table, he is looking back on the success of the 2014 ? 2018 Council term as a whole.

?We certainly didn't agree on every issue, and that is to be expected, but some of the major accomplishments we brought forward this term are going to be fantastic,? says Mr. Thom. ?Library Square is moving forward, the Armoury is moving forward, the Hallmark Lands are moving forward and, of course, there's the designation of the historic downtown Yonge Street properties, which is winding its way through the process as well. Some of these issues will spill into the new term, but I am proud as a Council we were able to make decisions and move forward on all of those issues, and others, that will have a real positive impact on our Town moving forward.?

Like many who put their name forward for political office, Mr. Thom said he was hoping that first he could get elected and then put his particular skillsets forward to make a positive impact on the community. He sought to bring a ?positive frame of mind? to the campaign trail and was ?extremely grateful to be entrusted by the voters? and propelled to Council.

?For me, the main driver was to become involved; I had something to contribute and I wanted to contribute it in a positive way,? he says. ?Heritage preservation is really important to me and that developed a lot more over the year sitting on the Heritage Advisory Committee. Like a lot of Aurorans I cherish the vast heritage architecture we have around Town and I was certainly interested in seeing that maintained and really enhanced. That only got more pronounced over my four years on Council.?

Mr. Thom came to Town Hall with a background in sports marketing, which was one area of expertise he brought to the table hoping he could use for positive municipal gains. Pushing for a new way for the Town to think about how to get itself out there ? including facility sponsorship ? he says there were ?innovative ways? to realise more revenues that translate down to the taxpayer.

?I give most of the credit to our staff at the Town, highlighting that from the Council table has been great because, with staff's help, we have been able to move that forward and to really expand our sponsorship and marketing, which is nice,? he says. ?It is not the be all and end all, and it is not going to make massive amounts of revenue, but it will be nice to chip away at something that is not the taxpayers. I also think it is nice for businesses being able to advertise and grow. It's always a win-win. I have to thank Robin McDougall for really bringing that forward [on her appointment as Director of Recreation] and making that a priority once she came

on.

?I think, for me, my biggest accomplishments are the accomplishments of the council as a whole. We all fought very hard for our vision and contributed our visions to what is becoming Library Square, just as an example. Every single Councillor brought something unique to the table and I think that process is a tough one, it's a frustrating one, but because we have a diverse group of people who have come together on Council to lend their voice, expertise and life experience. Projects like Library Square, if you go back to the beginning of that project to where it is now, it has evolved and evolved significantly. I think that is a testament to the fact this Council worked constructively. We didn't always agree, but we worked constructively to move it forward. That is what I look back on with pride.?

Now that the 2014 ? 2018 Council term is in the history books, Mr. Thom says he has very few regrets over decisions made or any potential missed opportunities.

?I think you can always Monday Morning Quarterback decisions, how they were made, and the process and so forth,? he says. ?I think on the major issues, I think this Council worked together positively, constructively. Again, not always seeing eye to eye but moving the major projects forward. As a team, we did quite well. We had different perspectives, different life experiences, different levels of expertise. When the residents look at the work of this Council as a whole, they will see the same thing.

?I would like to thank all the members of the public who supported me in the last election. I would like to thank all the volunteers in Aurora who give up their time, really making our community a better place, and I just think they are fantastic. Thanks to the residents for a fantastic four years as Councillor and I wish all the residents the best in the future.?