

Aurora Votes 2022: Czarnecka wants to be strong voice for Ward 4 residents



Iwona Czarnecka first threw her hat into the political arena earlier this year, vying to represent the riding of Newmarket-Aurora as a candidate for the New Blues.

The first-time candidate says she felt her voice wasn't being heard and, when meeting with residents, she says she met many others who felt the same way.

Now running for a place at Aurora's Council table as a candidate for Ward 4, Czarnecka says she wants to bring fresh ideas to the table while also being a powerful voice for her neighbours.

"I have been in Aurora since 2013 and we decided to start our family and raise our family here. I'm really engrained in the community," she says. "I believe in Council you make changes that serve the community in real time but also add to the prosperity of the future of the community. I think in Council I can really serve constituents and I can really maintain the fiscal responsibility we've had thus far in Council while supporting and investing in future programs that will benefit future generations and the prosperity of this Town."

Czarnecka was an early entry into the Council race, but initially signed up to run in Ward 5. The switch to Ward 4 came in the last week potential candidates were able to change their minds or withdraw. Whether to run in Wards 4 or 5 was a consideration from the very beginning, she said. But, in the end, she decided Ward 4 is "where I really think I could serve the community best."

"I want to be a voice for that community," she says. "I want to engage residents of Ward 4 to become more proactive and engage in municipal politics in terms of getting people to have somebody they can rely on that they could speak to when they have concerns. I want to be ahead of the game and I also want to mobilize people to know they have a Councillor who is standing up for them, standing up with them, and sees the concerns in that ward right away. I want to stand for the community in the same way I want to stand for all of Aurora."

Ahead of the election, some of the candidate's top priorities are the economy, promoting the environment by planting more trees, and managing growth, particularly when it comes to traffic in the ward.

"I think it is important to start looking at initiatives to cultivate an environment to get small businesses to want to reopen in those empty spaces," she says of businesses that didn't survive the pandemic. "We have been very lucky in Aurora. We have been fairly resilient throughout the pandemic, but I did sit with businesses on their last days crying that they had to close their doors because they just weren't able to deal with the impact of the lockdowns and were able to keep their heads above water. I would love to

promote initiatives that would help bring businesses back to those empty spaces.

?Especially coming out of the pandemic right now, I think we need to start expanding events that we have that allow businesses to flourish. I think that is really important for our local economy: extending the Christmas market, allowing more vendors in at the Town Square concerts, potentially looking at having multiple pedestrian days for restaurants to open and for there to be that hustle and bustle in Town Square where we can be supporting the businesses that were hit so hard by the pandemic.

?Another larger issue is making sure that our community services are growing so that we have spaces available. One thing I know in the Town of Aurora will really pride themselves on, especially families with young children like myself, is that I don't have to wake up at 6 a.m. to make sure my kids get into swimming lessons. We want to make sure those programs are available and we are expanding our sports facilities to ensure that as families grow in our community we can support that growth and we can still support those same community services we can really pride ourselves on in Aurora.?

A strong supporter of the Town Square (formerly Library Square) project, Czarnecka says she sees the potential it has to ?bring the community forward? and, if elected, will push to make sure all deadlines are met to bring the project to fruition.

?It's important to have new and fresh ideas in municipal Council and I think I bring that to the table. I think I bring a passion and I think it is time for a change and I think I'm the right change for this upcoming election. Council has done an amazing job over the last four years and I think I could just add to what Council has already done.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter