

Council wants Federal support for housing as election approaches

By Brock Weir

All Federal parties are at the ready for an election this October, but before the politicians hit the campaign trail, they should be pressed for a commitment for affordable housing, according to Aurora Council.

Council voiced its support this month for forging ahead with encouraging Federal leaders to support projects that would improve affordable housing in communities like Aurora, during discussions by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), which provides a united municipal voice to the Federal Government and other bodies.

This was a view that will be taken back to the FCM by Councillor Paul Pirri, who represents Aurora and York Region at that table.

Before Council was a report from the FCM outlining key initiatives moving forward. Affordable housing, said the FCM, has been identified as an important issue for Canadians, regardless of the urban-rural divide and will be a part of the group's election advocacy in the lead-up to the campaign.

"In my mind, in an election year, we should let our voices be heard and we should move items forward," said Councillor John Abel. "We have to be engaged at all levels. The importance coming up in an election year is you get representation at a very high level from all parties that will listen and make political promises, for what they're worth, to the concerns of the municipalities.

"Affordable housing will address two issues: homelessness, and it will address the need we have for our youth, who are vacating our municipalities to city centres that do have affordable housing. We need our youth segment, as well as our seniors, to reside back in Aurora so we can attract businesses. That is a concern that I think we should, collectively, be asking the Federal government for."

If there is a piece of land that would be suitable for affordable housing, funding should be there to help make that project a reality, he concluded.

Council reiterated its support for Councillor Pirri remaining on the Board of Directors for the FCM for the remainder of the term. They voted in favour of a motion from Mayor Geoff Dawe stating just that, along with the funding to send him to meetings as required at a cost of up to \$8,000.

"I think Councillor Pirri has done a very good job in terms of representing Aurora and York Region at FCM," said Mayor Dawe. "I think it is extremely important the work FCM does, so I heartily endorse this."

This was an opinion shared by Councillor Michael Thompson.

"The FCM is such a strong voice for municipal governments," he said. "[We are] very fortunate to have somebody who sits on the Board of Directors. There is a cost to send Councillor Pirri to all these meetings and I think when you read through all the reports and see all the issues he is dealing with and talking in conjunction with his fellow board members, I think there is tremendous value."