

Councillor-elect Kim wants to ensure Aurora's financial house is in order



By Brock Weir

Nearly two weeks after last month's Municipal Election, the results still feel like something of a dream to the new Councillor-elect Harold Kim.

Along with Jeff Thom and Tom Mrakas, Mr. Kim is one of the three new faces Aurora voters selected to serve for the 2014 - 2018 term. For him, it was a humbling experience that has a surreal side.

"Everything feels like a dream," he says. "You start the journey with the motive of just wanting to serve your community and be able to contribute and then it becomes more and more clear that it is possible that that has happened."

Looking back over the course of the campaign from when he signed up in the early spring to October's crunch time, Mr. Kim said it truly feels like it was a two-year campaign versus the four month reality.

"But, it feels like a good dream and I am very appreciative and humbled the residents of Aurora elected me," he said. "I do feel a lot of pressure that I have to make sure I fulfil these expectations that Aurorans have put out for me. There is a lot of pressure to meet that expectation and all I can do is my best. If I do my best I can live with it."

After he registered to throw his hat into the ring, Mr. Kim said he didn't have a specific campaign in mind other than getting himself out there, introducing himself to voters, and showing them what he has to offer. It was a very "grassroots" approach. One candidate, Mr. Kim said, told him he was "naïve" in his approach, but after some consideration he disagreed with that assessment.

"I hope that people's expectations are realistic but, at the same time, I am an idealist and I believe that anything is possible, so that is the way I go about doing things," he said. "Inevitably, not everyone is going to be pleased with what has been done [but] the other perspective is I get a sense that people see me as " and I say this not to boast about myself " a little bit different and being new to politics and municipal government.

"They see me as an independent, honest guy and I just hope I am able to meet those expectations, and that is something that should be easier for me because of who I am. I have led a clean life and I like to think I am honest and [have integrity]. When you're in the public life, there is always going to be someone who perceives you differently and I can't really do anything about that. I think I will try my best to meet people's expectations that they view me as an honest, hardworking guy and I will continue to conduct myself in the way I conducted my campaign and the way I have conducted myself most of my life " and that is to be a stand-up person who stands up for all the residents I represent."

As Mr. Kim met with, and learned more on, his fellow candidates, he said he counted several people who had specific issues they were championing, from the Aurora Community Tennis Club, the Oak Ridges Moraine, and the Aurora Cultural Centre. These are all causes he said he supports, and there is a lot of 'pressure' on the incoming Council to resolve any outstanding issues that pertain to them.

Looking ahead to the incoming term, there are still projects Mr. Kim said will be carry-overs from the outgoing term, such as multi-use facilities for groups like the Aurora Community Tennis Club, as well as large scale projects like Aurora's Joint Operations Centre, which is currently under construction on Industrial Parkway North.

With his background in banking and finance, Mr. Kim said he has a keen interest in understanding and clarifying Aurora's financial position. He said he wants a 'good representation' of how much money Aurora has right now, the health of future revenue streams, development charges, and other ways in which the Town can yield money. This is especially important, he added, in planning for the future.

'You can't make those decisions unless we know what our financial situation is,' he said. 'One of the things that is frustrating to me is there seems to be various reasons [for various] numbers. Understanding the financial position of the Town would be my first priority. I think finance is on everyone's list, whether you are a senior with a fixed budget or a young family. I think finance is something that is top of mind for everybody.'

I have heard a lot of different comments during the election period in terms of people saying we are spending money that we don't have. Some say we have spent \$30 million on the Joint Operations Centre, but other candidates refuted that, saying it hasn't even come close to that. I am kind of stupefied as to why there are so many numbers being bandied about, so I want to know exactly what our position is, draw a line between a future income stream, and what activities and projects each is attached to. You can connect those dots and find out what is accounted for, what is not, and find out what the true number is 'and all nine of us can agree upon the number so we don't have these misconceptions. I think that's what the frustration was with a lot of people.'

In the few weeks remaining until the new Council's inauguration, Mr. Kim likens the experience almost to the flipside of a university commencement in that people are there to congratulate you on the accomplishment of being elected, but the true accomplishments are yet to come. He plans on giving thanks to his family, friends, and numerous volunteers who made his campaign a success.