

Councillors give ?humbled? thanks and chart vision as they take places at table



Wendy Gaertner is now Aurora's longest-serving incumbent Councillor. Auroran photos by David Falconer

By Brock Weir



Councillor John Abel



Councillor Sandra Humfries



Councillor Michael Thompson



Councillor Jeff Thom



Councillor Wendy Gaertner



Councillor Harold Kim



Councillor Tom Mrakas



Councillor Paul PirriA humbled sense of gratitude and responsibility got the new term of Council off to a united start last week, as the six re-elected Councillors and their three new counterparts took their places at the Aurora Council table following this fall's Municipal Election.

After garnering the highest number of votes in the October 27 poll, Councillor John Abel, as Deputy Mayor, was the first Councillor to make his way to the podium after the body of eight took their Oaths of Office in unison following Mayor Geoff Dawe.

JOHN ABEL

In his remarks, Councillor Abel spoke of his pride of being re-elected, and congratulated Mayor Dawe and his colleagues on their achievements.

"It is, indeed, exciting times," said Councillor Abel. "It takes a commitment as a Councillor to do your research, to come to Council to make decisions, and to engage in the community, and often I dive into that."

He also paid tribute to his two children and, in particular, to his wife Tracy, for her advice, mentorship, and support not only over this most recent campaign, but over the previous four-year Council term.

"I am looking forward to working with our staff and continue to engage with the community, organizations, and great volunteers we have here in Aurora," he concluded.

SANDRA HUMFRYES

In her emotion-charged remarks, Councillor Humfries said she was "honoured and thrilled" to have the "privilege" of serving Aurorans in a second Council term. Being a Councillor, she added, is the most "incredible position" she has ever held, and one in which she continues to be excited to fill looking into the future.

"We have a wonderful Council and I can't wait to get started," she said. "We have a great four years ahead [with] a lot of wonderful ideas and exciting initiatives coming forward that will just bring our community even closer together and [provide] even more enjoyment for everyone."

Mentioning her husband Brad, children Jennifer and Stephen, grandson Enrico, father Enzo, parents-in-law Bob and Beth, and numerous friends, she thanked them for "all the work that you did for me, your support, and accepting me for who I am. Sometimes I can drive you all crazy, but I wanted to thank you for helping me with the flyers and campaigning. I will never forget it.

MICHAEL THOMPSON

Being a Councillor is like "no other experience" Michael Thompson has had, and it was an "honour", he said, to be back.

"To have the residents of Aurora put their trust and faith in me to represent their interests is truly something that I can take to heart, and I am sure that every day I come here that I am always looking at the best interests of our community, but we don't do it alone," he said. "I am very grateful to have had the support of many residents who have encouraged me over the years and who have taken the time out of their day to share their thoughts and opinions, especially on the election trail.

Citing his wife, Natalie, and daughter, Carly, for their "tremendous support and help" over the years, he said their help has gone a long way in helping him "focus on being the best Councillor I can be in serving the residents of Aurora."

"I look forward to the next four years of all of us working together towards the betterment of our community and our residents' daily lives," he said. "I look forward to next week and getting down to work."

JEFF THOM

Councillor Jeff Thom was the first of Aurora's new lawmakers to address the audience. Congratulating the Mayor and his colleagues, he said he was looking forward to what he hoped would be a positive and productive next four years.

"I am confident that together we can move our Town forward to meet the challenges of the future," he said.

In his remarks, he thanked his family, including his girlfriend and parents, for their hard work on the campaign trail.

"I am very lucky to have had the support of my family and friends, who are all committed to working very hard for a successful campaign," he said. "We set up our campaign headquarters in my dad's garage and we spent a lot of nights there. It was a really exciting experience and it is quite an honour and a privilege to be here tonight. Aurora, you have put your trust and confidence in me, and I am truly honoured. I am going to work hard every single day."

WENDY GAERTNER

Now entering her twelfth year, and fourth term as an Aurora Councillor, Wendy Gaertner is now the most seasoned member of Council. Her re-election, she said, indicated to her that her priorities and goals are on the right track.

"I stand before you for the fourth time to sincerely thank the voters for placing their confidence in me and what I stand for," she said. "I have worked hard to honour that trust. During the past 11 years I have championed the need for an open, transparent and accountable government process, one that values the public's input in decision-making, decisions that will affect us all. I have encouraged responsibility with our tax dollars and voted against incurring unnecessary debt and inappropriate use of our tax rate stabilization fund."

Her support, she said, extended towards the protection of environment, encouraging public input through advisory committees, heritage efforts, youth and seniors issues, accessibility, and the disclosure of details on the sale of public land.

"I will continue to do what I believe is right for the Town of Aurora," she concluded. "I look forward to a Council that respects the right of everyone to voice their opinions. Diversity of opinion is very important in decision-making and in a democratic process."

HAROLD KIM

In a lighthearted speech, Councillor Harold Kim said it was an honour to be able to serve with everyone around the table. In giving thanks, he singled out his sons and, in particular, his wife Carol, who encourages him to remember "every special moment."

"I will remember this moment and the whole process of this campaign because it has really made my relationship with my wife stronger, my family stronger, and has given me a lot of experience," said Councillor Kim, who works in finance by trade. "I feel like I have aged 20 years, but when I was canvassing it was a very humbling experience, and when I serve the community of Aurora, I will remember that humility because that is who we are. We are servants, after all, and that is one thing I would like to remember."

"I am happy to know we are all gifted in different ways, we come from different backgrounds, different educations and qualifications," he concluded. "I am very happy to say that I think we have a bulletproof investment portfolio here. We are very well diversified!"

TOM MRAKAS

First and foremost in Councillor Tom Mrakas' mind in addressing the audience was offering his "sincerest thanks" to everyone in Aurora who "put their faith and confidence" in electing him to Council. It was, he added, a humbling honour.

"As I stand here in front of you tonight, with so many residents I have visited while canvassing door-to-door these past few months, I have witnessed the passion that this community has for our Town," he said. "This is the passion I will bring to the Council table and everything I do on behalf of the residents that I serve. I won't make any promises, but I will make a commitment: a commitment to work with Council for you."

He also pointed his thanks at his sign team, his door-to-door team, and everyone who gave him advice along the way, including his wife, former councillor Alison Collins-Mrakas, who he described as "the best campaign manager anyone could have" not just over

the last few months, but in life.?

?You are my partner, my best friend, and I love you,? he said. ?With that being said, it is time to get to work, roll up our sleeves, and let's get things done.?

PAUL PIRRI

?Beside every successful man is a surprised woman,? joked Councillor Paul Pirri while thanking his girlfriend and family for their support over the election campaign.

In his remarks, he said he was ?extremely excited? about working with the new Council, and gave his appreciation to all those who put their names forward on the ballot, including those who were not successful.

?They want to serve Aurora and it proves that we are not just in good company here, but we are truly in great company,? he said. ?Over the last four years I have worked to foster connections within the community and I look forward to growing those connections and connecting more people as we move forward.?