

Dawe and Regional mayors promote York to Trudeau



By Brock Weir

Bags of money.

That's what Mayor Geoff Dawe quipped when asked what he and Justin Trudeau discussed when the latter made a whistle-stop tour of Aurora last June, including a campaign stop at the Aurora Public Library.

In all seriousness, Mayor Dawe said at the time he was struck by the Liberal leader's 'charisma', and last week he was glad to see not much has changed as he joined his fellow mayors from the Region of York for a meeting with the new Prime Minister to discuss issues important to the area.

He didn't say whether 'bags of money' were an issue on the table, but it wouldn't have gone amiss in addressing some of the issues they did present to the Prime Minister.

'We had four priority points,' says Mayor Dawe. 'Transportation is on everybody's minds, along with affordable housing, although our need is not as great as Toronto's, and I think most people would recognize that. We are still underserved in the area of affordable housing, so that is certainly something we wish to address at the Region. Infrastructure, particularly infrastructure related to water and wastewater was another.'

When it comes to transportation, there will be some significant issues that will need to be considered by all levels of government, particularly when Aurora is part of the first stage in Ontario's all-day two-way GO Train service and Rapid Express Rail.

'The tone of the meeting was very receptive,' says Mayor Dawe, noting he felt the Prime Minister and the Minister of the Environment were 'actually interested in working with municipalities.'

'They understand that municipalities are the substantial element of the population in Canada, there is an awareness of some of the imbalances in terms of infrastructure loading on the municipalities as well as the tax revenue that we get. From my perspective, and that of my colleagues, there is a definite perception that they want to work with municipalities and see how we fit this together.'

From Mayor Dawe's perspective, the biggest opportunity to come out of meetings like these is to 'engage' senior members of government in the issues that matter at the local level.

'You can't take the risk that they will know who you are,' he says. 'You have to get out there and make sure they know who you are. Like any other good relationship, you have to remind them why you're so special.'

?Some people in public life are substantially different from what they are in private life and my impression of the Prime Minister is he is very similar. He is very comfortable with people and I find him to be a very charismatic person, quite frankly. I guess in that case the apple did not fall far from the tree.?