

IN GOOD COMPANY: A Time of Thanks

By Mayor Geoffrey Dawe

It has been a whirlwind of activity in our Town in the few weeks since my last In Good Company article, with news both saddening and encouraging.

I want to thank members of our community once more for their many generous offers of assistance to Aurora United Church after the devastating fire on April 11. For those wishing to help with reconstruction, an account has been established at the BMO Bank branch at 15252 Yonge Street. The account is ?Aurora United Church Rebuilding Fund,? number 0303-8976-766.

Any and all support would be greatly appreciated.

Thanks again to members of Central York Fire Service, York Regional Police and York Region EMS for their swift response and professionalism during this tragedy. Containing this blaze took the efforts of our entire fire service, and I greatly appreciate the support from our neighbours, whose fire services ?had our back? while we were fully deployed.

I often note the need for infrastructure and emergency service investments and just highlighted our recently purchased new fire truck and 20-person crew in my March column. April 11 proved to be an instance where these investments were instrumental to the safety of our residents.

On April 17, I had the tremendous opportunity to propose a joint Aurora-Newmarket university campus to York University and Seneca College, with Newmarket Mayor Tony Van Bynen, Newmarket Regional Councillor John Taylor and Dr. Dave Williams, President and CEO of Southlake Regional Health Centre.

With mere weeks to prepare, our two

communities came together in the spirit of partnership and co-operation, identified a strategic property and formulated a comprehensive 50-minute audio-video proposal for York University and Seneca College's consideration.

It was an incredible undertaking and I am extremely proud of the professional, creative and engaging submission we developed and delivered; a product of many hours of dedicated and spirited work from our staff.

Despite a solid proposal that featured many unique advantages over other locales, and one that York University called ?innovative,? we were unsuccessful in advancing to the second round of the evaluation process.

While much work went into this effort, I have absolutely no regrets pursuing a university campus in our community. Northern York Region needs access to post-secondary education and an Aurora-Newmarket university makes sense. We have the needed infrastructure, central location and advanced, gridlock-free transportation network to make this happen.

As we aptly demonstrated during this process, we also have the resolve of two communities which are willing to put aside the differences that often occur between municipalities, work together as equal partners and make local options for post-secondary education a reality.

To Markham, Richmond Hill and Vaughan, who are still in the running for a York University campus, I offer best success for the next round of evaluations.

York Region needs a university! With a population of 1.2 million people, we are the largest municipality in Ontario not to have a university within its borders. Whichever site is ultimately selected by the Government of Ontario, I hope it will provide the access students from northern York Region need and deserve.

On the lighter side of things, I hope everyone has the opportunity to come to Town Hall on May 3 and 4 to see a wonderful assortment of artwork from local artists at the 52nd annual Juried Art Show and Sale. This fantastic event, presented in association with the Society of York Region Artists (SOYRA), features something for all tastes and offers many pieces for sale. Whether you are buying or simply browsing, it is a great place to see the talents of Aurora's artisans.

I hope to see you there!