

IN GOOD COMPANY: Getting Down to Business

By Mayor Geoffrey Dawe

As we enter the holiday season, I hope that each of you has the opportunity to spend some well-deserved time with family and friends, and reflect upon the successes of 2014.

It is back to business at Aurora Town Hall and at York Region. On December 2, our new Council was sworn in at our Inaugural Council Meeting at Town Hall.

It was a ceremony steeped in tradition, complete with a piper, colour guard, our Town Crier, representatives of our faith communities and members of Aurora's Queen's York Rangers.

It was a wonderful evening and I thank Town staff for organizing such a distinguished and well-organized event to usher in the 2014-2018 municipal term.

On December 11, York Regional Council held its Inaugural Council meeting, electing Wayne Emmerson, former Mayor of Whitchurch-Stouffville, as its first new Chair in 17 years. I am excited to continue working with Wayne, a knowledgeable and seasoned political veteran, and congratulate him on his successful campaign to succeed retiring Chairman Bill Fisch.

I also look forward to working with the newly sworn-in members of York Regional Council, and would like to thank Newmarket Regional Councillor John Taylor for running a spirited campaign for the Chair's position. While I ultimately voted with the majority of my Regional colleagues in electing Wayne Emmerson, I was pleased to hear John's principled stance at supporting social services for vulnerable residents, and look forward to his continued positive contributions at Regional Council.

The election of the Regional Chair has been the subject of some contention, as it is conducted by those democratically voted onto Regional Council, not the electorate at-large.

While there are certainly merits to both systems, Aurora has been well-served by the present model. With the election of a former mayor of a Northern 6 community ? a group of which Aurora is a member ? I am strongly encouraged that Aurora and the other smaller communities in York Region will continue to have a strong voice at the Council table.

With Councils in place, business has quickly turned to our annual budget process. I would like to thank the residents who took the time to give us feedback using our Citizen Budget online survey tool. This was the first time we used this easy-to-use interactive survey and we will continue to use this to gauge resident sentiment. The results of the survey will be sent to Council for their consideration during the budget process.

Resident feedback is critical to helping Council set budget priorities. I encourage all Aurorans to get involved in the New Year and attend one of our upcoming consultations. The consultation schedule will appear in January editions of our Town Notice Board, located on Page 2 of The Auroran.

The weather was on everyone's mind this month, as we grappled with the first major snowfall of the young winter season. Snow removal crews across Greater Toronto struggled to quickly clear roads and sidewalks during the protracted snowfall, and I wish to thank residents for their patience as our winter maintenance crews worked to keep our roads and sidewalks clear.

Residents can stay apprised of snow removal efforts with the new Where's My Snow Plow? app on the Town website. It provides real-time information on the location of our plows and displays which roads have been plowed. For details, please visit the Town's Winter Maintenance page, which will be on the www.aurora.ca homepage until spring.

Residents are reminded that primary or high-volume traffic roads are salted and sanded first after snow or freezing rain, followed by secondary or lower-volume roads.

Snow removal takes place after 8 centimetres of snow has fallen on primary and secondary roads. Road crews aim to have all roads cleared within 16 to 24 hours after snowfall has stopped and sidewalks within 24 hours. However, clearing may take longer if snowfall persists. Arterial roads, such as Yonge Street and Wellington Street are maintained by York Region.

I have received many calls and emails concerning the closure of the Highland Gate Golf Club, which occurred on November 10. While many have speculated on the fate of the property, there has been no change to the property's status since my last column on November 20. I remain committed to updating residents when any new information is available. The Town has a Highland Gate information page on the www.aurora.ca homepage.

Before signing off, I invite everyone to attend our Family First Night on December 31. Please note that the celebration will take place at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex, as the Aurora Family Leisure Complex construction wraps-up. This is a great family event and a fun way to usher-in the New Year.

I hope to see you there!