

IN GOOD COMPANY: Honours

Honouring those who build and sustain our community

By Mayor Geoffrey Dawe

It seems that winter is trying to stage a November arrival, after a very mild October.

Somehow, being removed ? however modestly ? from our climatic comfort zone seems rather fitting this time of year, especially when we reflect back on Remembrance Day to the men and women who sacrificed so much so we could live in a free society.

One cannot imagine the horrors that our countrymen endured in the trenches of the western front in WWI or braving machine gun fire on Juno Beach in WWII.

Comprehending the constant threat of attack within a militarized Korean peninsula, in battle-scarred Sarajevo or on the deadly desert terrain of Kandahar, seems impossible. And while this may be difficult to envision, Canadians faced these dire circumstances again and again, to uphold our beliefs of liberty and freedom.

For not having to endure the horrors of war, I am eternally grateful. For the unimaginable toll that was paid for this privilege, I will always remember.

I suspect that many Aurorans share similar sentiments about Remembrance Day, which is why ? year after year, regardless of the weather ? it is so gratifying to see residents come out in large numbers to pay their respects at the Aurora Cenotaph.

In Aurora, time has not worn our resolve or our memory.

Reflection has been a running theme in our community this year. We celebrated our 150th birthday and marvelled in how a tiny hamlet grew into a prosperous municipality that offers a lifestyle second-to-none.

During this celebration, we recently highlighted the importance of our merchants in a four-week promotional campaign featured in this newspaper, among others.

It is quite appropriate that we closed this month-long promotion with the York Region Business Series conference: Business Innovation in Changing Times. The conference was extremely well-attended, featured a variety of perspectives and offered an intriguing look into how business leaders use innovation to thrive in an era of ever-increasing global competition.

One concept which resonated with me was that innovation often fails due to a lack of understanding or perspective on what your business really is.

Our first keynote speaker, Jim Harris, noted that sometimes business owners focus too much on working in a company instead of on the company. In his view, the lack of the ?big picture? causes missed opportunities.

Speaker Ian Proudfoot noted that struggling newspapers failed to realize they are not in the newspaper business, but the content business.

Capitalizing on online media and flyer advertisements were key content strategies the York Region Media Group used to stay relevant and profitable in a world of shrinking newspaper advertising revenues.

Ultimately, understanding your business and its role in your industry lays the groundwork for innovation. Only then can you embrace change, challenge the status quo and outwork your competition.

In my last article in The Auroran, I mentioned the indispensable contribution that business makes to the viability and long-term stability of communities. We are incredibly fortunate to have a diverse and robust business sector in Aurora.

Creating and maintaining an environment where business can thrive should be a key pillar of any municipal economic strategy. It is one of the fundamental principles that fuelled my run for public office, and it is an approach I take in all Town business dealings, economic and otherwise.

Cultivating a climate to support business is a small investment to ensure long-term prosperity. The same rings true with community organizations.

I was very pleased to attend the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame on November 11 at Town Hall. The Sports Hall of Fame is a wonderful initiative that highlights the athletic achievements of Aurorans over the many decades of our history.

Sport Aurora deserves tremendous credit for bringing this idea from concept to reality, and I was proud to support their efforts along with many deserving community groups who received assistance through the Aurora Mayor's Charity Golf Classic this year.

I have long been a supporter of Sport Aurora. Their work to promote athletics and sportsmanship is a worthy endeavour. The Town has a mandate to promote sport and recreation, and I believe Sport Aurora has a place in these efforts.

Recently, however, some on our Council moved to remove this group from their part-time presence at Town Hall.

Removing a group that is doing a great job promoting our Town's athletic legacy is entirely disheartening. Justifying it by somehow suggesting that assisting such an effort is unfair to other organizations reeks of cynical politicking.

With the next municipal election on the horizon, exaggeration and hyperbole can be expected. Combing through the miasma of political posturing during the 'silly season' is an arduous task, but I hope it is a challenge our residents accept.

Too often good initiatives like the Sports Hall of Fame get derailed by political agendas and short-sightedness. These are lost opportunities that seldom return.

Community-building takes the work of many. In the long run, it is important to remember that our soldiers, business pioneers and athletic champions are the true heroes that people remember, not politicians.

As we continue to reflect on our accomplishments as a community, let us never forget to give thanks, support and credit where it is truly due.