

New Chamber of Commerce chair hopes to amp up the volume



By Brock Weir

As a professional mediator, Patricia Poulin-Ulbricht gains a significant amount of satisfaction from helping to empower people to make their own decisions.

She says she loves the beauty of that, but has a loathing for what she describes as 'power imbalances' when people are trying to make the best decisions for themselves, but are unable to do so.

In order to help rectify the balance, it is important for people to find their respective voices, and Ms. Poulin-Ulbricht wants to raise these voices throughout the community as the newly-minted Chair of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce.

Ms. Poulin-Ulbricht was elected Chair of the Chamber at this month's Annual General Meeting, succeeding Paul Smith. Now one of Aurora's loudest voices on behalf of business, she sees herself as an advocate for the everyday issues facing local business owners as well as a person who can keep an eye on a long-term vision for the community as a whole.

'We have always done a very good job in trying to keep ourselves in the know about everything that is going on in the Town, the Region, the Province and anything that is happening that could be affecting our membership to help them make really good business decisions,' she says. 'We want to ramp that up. That is something we really feel will be a way of being relevant and staying relevant, to make sure that we are an advocate for business in Town. We have always been involved but we're going to be more involved.'

To this end, Ms. Poulin-Ulbricht is planning on building and strengthening the Chamber's advocacy committee to build a storehouse of information from members that can be deployed to raise awareness.

Governance is also going to be a focus on her term to make sure the Chamber can lay the groundwork to ensure its sustainability into the future. They will evaluate risks to safeguard themselves and their members from everything that could have an impact on them. An example of this is the future development of transit down the Yonge Street corridor and anticipating alternatives if this has any adverse impact on the annual Aurora Street Festival.

An additional focus includes a look at how the Aurora Chamber of Commerce can ramp up revenue from non-members through generating new ideas around events and innovation.

“Everything is very goal-oriented right now,” she adds. “We all have our eye on the same goals and reaching the same targets.”

Ms. Poulin-Ulbricht first joined the Aurora Chamber of Commerce as an individual member and quickly became an active volunteer. She got her feet wet working on their marketing and membership committee and gradually became more passionate as a volunteer.

“I wanted to have more of a voice,” she says, of why she became more involved and joined the Board of Directors. “What spurred my passion was the workings of the Committee itself, where it was working well and, in particular, where it wasn't working well. I thought if I could get involved I could have more of a voice and help them to be better at what they do.”

As Chair, she says she sees herself as the “main facilitator in the room” to bring together all the ideas from the “strong business leaders” currently sitting on the Board, to share ideas, and come up with solutions “particularly to what she says are among the biggest challenges currently facing Aurora businesses: struggles in the Downtown Core, adequate transportation, and ensuring Aurora residents have the opportunities to work within Aurora.”

“I see the Chair as somebody that helps the group stay focused and to use our resources to the best way possible,” she says. “Frankly, that is our brainpower and our time and efforts when we're out with our membership and doing our jobs on the committee. I see myself as a facilitator and somebody who can ensure we get the best out of each person around the table.”

“I think after my first 12 months of being the Chair, I would hope the level of passionate discussion that happens on the Board level is there. I hope the volume goes up in the discussions. I hope to get as much as I possibly can of the greatness sitting around the table, bring people and those thoughts out. My personal mark is that the volume rises and there is a lot more discussion around the table.”