

New Deputy Mayor 'humbled' by community's support



By Brock Weir

Harold Kim would have been just as happy placing sixth in the 16-way Council race, but residents of Aurora thought otherwise, giving him the edge to crown him Aurora's Deputy Mayor for the next four years.

The position of Deputy Mayor is a convention and designation that goes to the top vote-getter in the run for Council, and Mr. Kim, who was first elected to Council in 2014, came out on top with 6,013 votes compared to second-place finisher Wendy Gaertner's 5,875.

'The ranking surprised me because when there are this many seats, no one anticipates being the number-one vote getter,' Mr. Kim tells *The Auroran*. 'I would be just as happy finishing sixth as long as people are happy with me to get re-elected. You still only get the one vote [at the Council table] but I think it tells me people are getting to know me, they know what I stand for. So, does it make me any happier finishing first rather than sixth? Not really, but it does give me some validation that the work I put in over the first four years is paying off and people appreciate what I was able to accomplish with their help.'

Mr. Kim says his campaign strategy 'has always been about informing people who they are voting for', who he is as a person, his vision for Aurora's future, and to stay positive. It is easy to go negative on any number of issues, 'whether it be in people, policy or a plan,' but he says he believes his positivity resonated with voters.

'I find that this being my second campaign that the election narrative or theme is really built by the mayoral candidates and that flows down to the Council race,' he says. 'I found it to be someone in a negative cloud, but you just try to be positive and I think people identified with that.'

As he went door to door with his message, Mr. Kim says the two biggest issues he heard from residents were on the preservation of Aurora's stable neighbourhoods along with the ongoing renovation of the historic Aurora Armoury, which is set to become a campus of Niagara College's Canadian Food & Wine Institute.

So, now that he's been elected for a second term, what does a vote for Mr. Kim mean for the future of the Town's stable neighbourhoods, as well as the Armoury?

Mr. Kim answers the second part of that question first, stating he believes the campaign debate surrounding the Armoury was peppered with 'misinformation.'

'I know late in the campaign people were saying there was a provincial freeze with the funding of post-secondary education, but there has been a freeze for about a year and a half,' he says. 'There was a freeze when we went into this deal with Niagara College, so that is nothing new, but people will want to use that negative rhetoric to say incumbents or existing Councillors made a mistake. No, we knew that. The funding is a partnership between the school and the Town and that's it. It doesn't impact our plan and it is going to move forward and I think we're all excited about what is going to happen in the Armoury.'

'With regards to stable neighbourhoods, I door-knocked on the stable neighbourhoods area and I would say now it is about evenly divided in terms of where they are, the people who want the status quo said they feel intimidated and don't want to show up and face the other side. Certainly, I think seeing some of those new homes that have already been put up, some of them are, frankly, they're

not congruent with the neighbourhood. I think some subtle changes are necessary and we'll see what the consultant says. It all depends on which stable neighbourhood [we're talking about. I don't necessarily feel that change needs to happen in all three neighbourhoods.

?We're in the midst of doing an RFP for a consultant and we will see what the consultant has to say. Hearing from them, I think there needs to be a happy medium. In talking with many of those who want the status quo, some of them are willing to make subtle changes, so I think the best plan is what they say when no one is happy.?

Looking back over the campaign that was, Mr. Kim says he would like to thank everyone for giving him the opportunity to express his campaign themes and taking it all in in the spirit of openness.

?Whether they voted for me or not, everyone was very kind and respectful and I just want to thank everyone for their support,? he says. ?I'll give it 110 per cent to ensure that Aurora and all the residents live in a place where, as they say, work, live and play in the best possible town in York Region. I know everyone says this, but I would like to thank all the candidates for putting their names forward because this being my second time, it is a lot of sacrifice and time that is taken out of you and your family. I would like to say thank you to all the candidates for running and I hope that they all try to contribute in some way or form.

?One thing I have learned over the last four years is Aurora doesn't run itself just by nine people around the Council table, it is run by all the volunteers and people who sporadically come out to volunteer at events here and there. I would encourage all those candidates to contribute and get involved because they all have a lot to offer.?