

Noudelman seeks to find permanent solution to Aurora's French Immersion crunch



By Brock Weir

As Aurora's population is expected to grow significantly in just a few short years, Alex Noudelman, trustee candidate for the York Region District School Board, is focused on making sure there will be enough French Immersion spots to go around when new families arrive and grow in Aurora.

The 28-year-old King Resident and educator himself looked on as the situation became particularly taxed just a few short years ago. Many parents in Aurora were unhappy with the lottery system devised by the Board (YRDSB) to slot students into French immersion spots at Lester B. Pearson Public School, or split amongst other schools like Devin's Drive public School.

Many of the parents who had twins or had two children in the same grades were not happy because one would go to Lester B. Pearson on the east side of Yonge and the others would go to Devins Drive, he says. About two years ago they fixed that issue with Aurora Grove and that has given us a temporary solution. In 2015, Aurora is expected [to have a population of] 62,288. In 2011, it was 53,000. My role is working with the urban leaders who are working with the YRDSB and trying to find a permanent solution to French Immersion.

Having been in the education system since 2000, Mr. Noudelman has worked in a variety of capacities and grades, with a particular interest in working with special needs students, an interest which was sparked in him while mentoring students in after school programs in Grade 12.

I used to work with an individual whose child was special needs with severe autism, he explains. That is where most of my interest came from, working with this child, taking on the responsibility of home schooling as well, and then the success that we have had in educating the student has inspired me to further my skills, further my opportunities to help other students who are on the spectrum.

In this regard, Mr. Noudelman is not necessarily focused on the 3Rs, although he feels they are important. Dramatic arts too are a very important component of education, particularly as these subjects teach students to have empathy and [provide] character education that courses like math and science might not be able to teach. Resources, therefore, are particularly important, he says not only in materials but also in facilitators.

One local resource which is worth a second look is the future of George Street Public School, adds Mr. Noudelman. With the school set to close and its students enveloped into Aurora Senior Public School due to declining enrolment and limited spacing, Mr.

Noudelman urges the Board to consider all options before putting the land up for sale.

"I would like to see them utilize the space and I would be working very closely with the community leaders at the YRDSB in order to find the ways to utilize the building without selling the property," he says. "That is one of my main goals. We are a booming town and I think every space counts."

As the October 27 poll approaches, Mr. Noudelman counts his experience as one of his biggest assets during the campaign, but says his youth could be an interesting factor.

"Being young is a challenge as well as an asset," he says. "There may be someone who has more leadership experience, more experience with education, so I see that as well, but I also see that as a potential. I am not leaving the education system soon. I plan to stay here for years, even decades to come."