

VOTE 2014: Dawe officially launches re-election bid, posing question to Aurorans



By Brock Weir

Aurora is at a ?significant crossroads? in its history right now.

That is the word from Geoffrey Dawe as he officially launched his mayoral re-election campaign on Monday evening.

Before a room of over 110 supporters at St. Andrew's Valley Golf Club, including four current members of Council, and two Council candidates, Dawe said four years ago Aurorans wanted change ? real change and not ?change for change's sake.?

?There was no doubt that our residents were fed up with the antics [of the last] Council ? antics that had created a toxic atmosphere,? he said. ?Little wonder that one Councillor resigned and others simply refused to run again. Now, after four years of stability, four years of positive community growth, we are faced with the potential of being thrown right back to where we were before.?

John Gallo, who is, as of press time, Dawe's only challenger thus far in the mayoral race is a ?representative of that toxic atmosphere?, he claimed.

?Do we wish to return to the past?? Dawe continued. ?Do we wish ? do you wish ? to return to embarrassing headlines for our Town? A return to lawsuits as a result of public participation? Or are we going to continue to build Aurora? To continue to create an environment where Aurora is the best place to live in York Region and maybe even Canada? I know what I want for [my wife] Henny and me, for our children, and our children's children.?

In his remarks, Dawe underscored three key pillars of his campaign: Leadership, Community and Civility.

To be an effective leader, Dawe said one has to work with people to get things done and collaboration yields the best results. Laying the groundwork for a strong team, he said, is a hallmark of that.

That, he added, was one of his main priorities when he took office ? addressing what he described as ?the reality of poor staff morale? and to ?stem the tide of staff turnover.?

?On December 1, 2010, my first day on the job, I met with the senior staff team, held up a copy of The Globe and Mail's Top 100 Employers and asked why the Town of Aurora wasn't one of them,? he said. ?I clearly stated that my goal was to be on the list and I am proud to say we've met that challenge by achieving an honourable mention. We need to be the best. [That] is a pretty solid indicator that our organizational leadership is on the right track.?

Although a mayor is only one vote, he added another priority was to 're-establish decorum' at the table.

'A leader understands that debate is healthy, but active discord and rancour is counter-productive to moving the Town's business forward,' he said. 'I am proud of the fact that under my leadership, this Council has been able to avoid much of the fractured and, frankly, hostile exchanges that typified the previous Council.'

'Frayed tempers have sometimes led to heated exchanges at the Council table, but skirmishes did not become multi-meeting wars. By being a strong leader, I have ensured the Town's business got done. I am proud to say I have kept order at the table, dignity in the chamber, and definitely protected the integrity of the Office of the Mayor.'

In addressing the pillar of community, efforts included the re-establishment of the Mayor's Charity Golf Tournament, which benefits charities and non-profits within Aurora, the development of a new agreement with the Aurora Cultural Centre and also 'carefully navigated' development to make sure there is a mix of 'developable land and protected open space.'

He also trumpeted a 'booming' housing market, the arrival of Bulk Barn's headquarters this spring, the completion of York Regional Police moving their senior management to their new headquarters on Don Hillock Drive, and a number of businesses which have planted roots in Aurora including Target, and found room to expand.

Providing 'stability' to residents and the business community is also something he said was important. This comes part and parcel with 'predictability', particularly in keeping tax rates from fluctuating 'dramatically.' To this end, he took aim at Councillors who questioned using mechanisms like the Tax Rate Stabilization Fund to 'smooth out the tax bumps' and said taxes need to be respected.

'Aurora is changing,' he said. 'It is not the town of 13,000 that Henny and I moved to in 1977. Back then, it was almost impossible to go anywhere in Town and not see someone you knew. We rarely ventured east of the tracks. There was simply nothing to venture to.'

'Today, we are about 58,000. The commercial base has grown to include a vibrant and growing community east towards Bayview. There are a multitude of languages heard. There is a growing and, I think, exciting diversity. Our challenge is to engage all of Aurora, to celebrate this diversity and to ensure there is only one Aurora 'neither east nor west' and to continue to build this place we call home.'

Fellow mayoral candidate John Gallo will launch his own campaign at a special event next Saturday, May 10, at The Mansion (Dinardo's). Watch for coverage of his launch in the May 15 edition of The Auroran.