

VOTE 2014: Museum and youth continue to be focus for incumbent Sandra Humfryes



By Brock Weir

When Sandra Humfryes first threw her hat into the political arena four years ago, one of her primary focuses was to make Aurora's museum a reality once again.

It was a hard battle, she says, but now that the groundwork has been laid and the museum is just a curator hire away from operating once more, fostering its growth will be a top job for Ms. Humfryes if she is elected to a second term this month.

"In my heart of hearts, I can't wait until we get our own museum," she says. "It might start small, but I know there is a big future there in terms of how it is going to grow, how it can become a state-of-the-art museum we can all be proud of, and that is something I will continue to work on."

"When I started four years ago, that was one of the main initiatives on my platform. It wasn't easy, it took four years of hard work and persistence, but it happened."

Ms. Humfryes was the last of the incumbents to formally register for re-election, doing so on September 12, the last possible day. While she had wanted to do so sooner, she says with restructuring at her day job in the communications industry meant she needed to make sure she still had their support to devote so much of her time to the Council position.

"I wanted to make sure I had that clear," she says. "Not running would have broken my heart. I love it so much, I love the Town, and Aurora is about the people and the community. Being able to contribute and give back is an honour and a privilege. It is good to have fresh perspective, new people entering, and everyone having an opportunity, but for me I think giving back for years of experience helps keep the ball rolling, and continues some of the initiatives we have worked on."

One such initiative, she says, is the development of the Community Space for Youth, also known as the Aurora Youth Centre, nearing completion at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex. Ms. Humfryes has been a vocal supporter of its development and its continued development is something she would like to foster.

"We have over 23 programs that are at 11 different sites in Aurora," says Ms. Humfryes of youth programming. "Sometimes basketball courts at high schools get cancelled on them and these youth go everywhere to try and find these programs. This is going to allow our programming to be consolidated all in one place. Youth know it is there, it is steady, dependable, and that is going to be a huge plus for youth in our community."

Looking ahead to the next four years, Ms. Humfries says keeping an eye on growth will be one of the most important issues facing the incoming Council, particularly when it comes to the thousands of new houses now under construction in the 2C development, and the thousands of individuals that will call them home soon enough.

‘We need to make sure support service levels continue to be maintained at this level and keeping tax rates as low as possible, and any increases marginal. At the end of the day, you live here, you want your garbage collected, your roads cleaned, and there is more and more of that happening,’ she says. ‘How do we continue to do that with the growth in the east of Town? We have a lot of challenges there and we need to continue to look at that as we grow out to keep things as stable as possible.’

Over the last four years on Council, Ms. Humfries counts being able to make a ‘contribution’ to the community as the most fulfilling aspect of their role. She says she hopes people feel she is representing them ‘fairly’ on Council and lending a voice to their concerns.

‘I do my best in terms of trying to get to what the issues are, what means a lot to residents, and trying to articulate and deliver them at the Council table as best I can,’ she says. ‘Every issue and important topic for residents is individual, it needs to be looked at, needs to be analysed, and needs to be decided upon. That has to be done by really allowing yourself to be in their shoes and represent them at the table properly. I listen to them, think about the issue, and don't let other influences around me impact that decision.’

‘For me, it is all about trying to work as a team. Yes, we have different personalities and things get articulated differently based on the nature of the individual, but I wish we could put those things aside and think about the business and not let that get complicated. Let's let go of the history and things that happened in the past and try to move forward and think of the issues instead of the personalities.’