

## Aurora Votes 2022: Access, downtown revitalization, and residential development are issues driving Ward 2 candidate Lajeunesse



A fully accessible community that goes beyond the east-west divide is a vision Daniel Lajeunesse has for Aurora, and it is a dream he hopes to bring to life as Councillor for Ward 2.

Lajeunesse, currently a member of the Town's Committee of Adjustment and previously a Council candidate in the 2018 Municipal Election, is looking to run a very different election campaign this fall.

In the last go-round, he had one sign which he took with him to various events and locations around Town to spread the word.

This time, however, he's assembled a team, a strategy and, yes, more signs, to help win a place to represent his neighbours at the table.

"If you asked me a year ago, I probably would have said no," says Lajeunesse on what prompted him to toss his hat into the ring for a second time. "But, on the Committee of Adjustment (which looks at planning applications and minor variances), Ward 2 has seen a lot of cases come to it, a lot of wheeling and dealing with developers but the last thing we [want to be] is a rubber stamp agency anymore."

Developers, he says, "frequently" come to the Committee and say that even though members have done their due diligence, if they vote against whatever proposal is before them, they will appeal to Ontario's Local Planning Appeals Tribunal.

Lajeunesse wants to see more support from Council towards the Committee of Adjustment so the development community takes local planning more seriously.

"There are some good bylaws at least in terms of intent but what is driving me? is the intent isn't necessarily followed by developers," he says, placing residential development at the top of his top three priorities. "It is simply an understanding of the bylaw and the execution of it are a little different. I want to tighten and make sure the intent of the bylaw is what is executed."

"There has to be some intelligence in how we develop and where we develop. We don't want condos to start appearing within our residential neighbourhoods and it has to have a logical flow in terms of that development. As much as we would love to maintain the population as it is, I know there are some provincial mandates that force us to expand and, since we don't have that control, we can at least control how that development is done, where it's done, what it looks like, and we control those options on what we build and

where we build it.?

Aurora's historic downtown core is a 'vital part of the community,' he says, and making sure it reaches its full potential is his second priority. It needs to be remembered that the section of Yonge Street that goes through the core is a municipal rather than regional road and the Town can 'control what we see here' 'including promoting what he describes as 'daytime businesses.'

'It is making it more of a destination location,' he says, noting there are few opportunities within Aurora to just grab an ice cream and go for a walk in the community. 'You usually just drive to that location, have an ice cream and leave. We should have something more vibrant. Worse than spending money is not using what you've spent that money on, so let's leverage those (downtown) investments and make sure you're not just having locals come to Aurora Town Square, Yonge Street, etc., but try to get some visitors here as well to enjoy its beauty, put a little more money in our coffers and, as a result, keep our taxes down.

'Town Square is an interesting piece of real estate we now have. Whether you like it or not, we do have it and if you use it properly and have a proper plan on how to use it, we can leverage it in order to bring people to the downtown core.'

And this goes for residents on either side of the railway corridor.

As the Province continues to move towards all-day two-way GO Train service, it is important 'and his third priority' to ensure that the Town isn't further divided by construction, or divided even after the project is completed.

'If we don't plan this properly and negotiate with the Province and the Region, we could end up with two towns for a small amount of time and it would be horrible if Ward 2 wouldn't be able to go to the new Farm Boy, Longo's, Sobeys or Walmart because they're afraid to be stuck in traffic every 15 minutes,' he says.

Connectivity is a driving force for Lajeunesse.

Recently tapped by Magna founder Frank Stronach to be part of his team behind the Sarit, Stronach's new battery-powered small vehicle, he says he has a deep appreciation for many forms of active transit, trails, cycling infrastructure and more, all of which he hopes to advocate for if he's successful in his Council bid.

'There are major issues and also some small issues and I will deal with it in the same way I deal with my professional life where you have multiple projects going; some are more important than others but it doesn't mean that you can't address multiple things at the same time.'

By Brock Weir  
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