

Aurora Votes 2022: Good governance and financial management are focuses for Ward 6 candidate Robert James Fraser



Fresh perspectives are needed at Town Hall when it comes to how taxpayer dollars are spent, says Ward 6 candidate Robert James Fraser.

Fraser, who works in media sales for a large nation-wide entertainment company, says after living in Aurora for nearly 30 years, he made a somewhat 'spontaneous' decision to throw his hat into the political arena with a focus on 'good governance.'

'Residents I have been talking to are looking for good governance,' he says. 'They are looking for accountability. Quite honestly, one of the big challenges is just to get municipal politics on the radar of the average Aurora resident. We know that voter participation rates for the municipal election are pretty pathetic and I'm trying to bring some awareness to we all spend a fair bit of money in taxes and understanding where that money is going.'

The redevelopment of Town Square is one area that has seen financial focus and, on that front, Fraser says a 'reality check' is in order.

'We're spending a ton of money on that particular development, a ton of money that is going in there from the Hydro sale that is going to go into that venture,' he says, stating 'sober second thought' is needed on creating a 'tourist destination' in the community. 'When you have Toronto on your footsteps, how realistic is that? I think there's a lot of money going into that project and is that really something the Town wanted or the Town needed?'

An additional focus for Fraser is the Town's agreement with Niagara College and its Canadian Food and Wine Institute on the historic Aurora Armoury. There are a lot of unanswered questions on this front, he contends.

'There are some things that I probably would have looked at differently from how Council has run things over the last couple of years,' he says. 'As someone who is not mired in the weeds and details, looking at it from the outside in, I question some of the various ways we're spending the money. I question why we have this multi-million-dollar baseball field in prime industrial lands that's not going to generate an industrial or employment tax rate. It's a beautiful facility, but what was our rationale in putting that into our limited supply of Industrial-zoned lands? Do we need another state-of-the-art facility?'

Beyond finances, Fraser says more needs to be done to protect existing natural and green spaces for future generations.

?I just don't think we can afford to lose any more of our green spaces if we want to maintain the quality of life in this Town,? he says. ?[I also want to look at] what we can do to bring in and attract what I call high-value employment opportunities. It's not another [restaurant] opening up, it's a semi-conductor chip manufacturer, something in high-tech, where you're bringing in \$100,000 wages as opposed to \$40,000 jobs.?

On all of these fronts, there is ?some more openness that Council needs to have with the citizenry of Aurora,? says Fraser.

?I believe that we need to keep what is green today and figure out innovatively how, if we want to increase density? it is really a question that comes back to the people of Aurora: we're either going to gobble up green space or have some intensification. Is that multi-storey residential you want to start putting in? You're redeveloping single family housing into duplexes or fourplexes and things like that where you can put more people into the same space and reduce the cost.

?If I look at real estate prices in this Town versus what I paid when I moved in here 29 years ago and what real estate is going for today, it's mind blowing. I probably couldn't afford to live in the house I live in today had I not been here already. Could my [adult children] buy a house in Aurora? Probably not now and where do we go with affordable housing issue? It's bigger than the Town that I see the Town? zoning and intensification to have some properties that are more reasonably priced. Can you go down the whole co-op housing model and how does that work in a Town like Aurora?

?If you're going to have a co-op approach where you have individuals paying market value rents or purchase prices and you have other individuals who are being subsidized? that has to come from somewhere and I don't think it's necessarily the citizen of Aurora subsidizing through their taxes housing. The housing affordability issue is a federal issue, it's a provincial issue. I don't think you can necessarily start to tackle it at a municipal level because you have 60-odd thousand people in Town. I just don't see that as tenable.?

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