

Aurora Votes 2022: 'This election is about Aurora's report card,' says mayoral candidate Durrant at campaign 'soft launch'



This fall's municipal election is about 'Aurora's report card,' and the current system has significant room for improvement, says mayoral candidate Phiona Durrant.

Durrant, the owner of Coconut Village Nails Spa, formally 'soft-launched' her mayoral bid at her Yonge and Wellington business on Saturday afternoon.

In her role as a business owner, Durrant says she hears the concerns of Aurora residents every day and when she asked what she could do about it, the answer was clear.

'While I wash their feet, I hear their 20-plus years of travelling Yonge and Wellington,' she said. 'While I polish their toes I hear about their fear of children having to leave Aurora due to unaffordable housing. While I serve them refreshments, I listen to their concerns about project delays, property tax increases. More spending. I hear the concerns of the seniors, I hear the concerns about accessibility, transit, parking, waste, and even the need for toilet facilities at parks.'

'Some of the concerns are municipal, some aren't, [but] I asked myself, 'What else can I do beyond listening, pampering, advising and agreeing?' While all those are great things, I said, 'If not me, then who?'

Durrant told supporters over the weekend that she doesn't want to be seen as a woman, a Black woman, a CEO, a member of the

Aurora Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, or as founder of the Aurora Black Community Association. Rather, 'I stand here as a human being.?'

'Raised by grandparents, I am passionate about your concerns and I understand your concerns,?' said the Jamaica-born Durrant. 'Being a business owner for 13 years raising children in my daycare, I understand the mental health issues and struggles in our families. I was given a hand-up as a new immigrant to this country by a white woman ? a \$100 handout and 10 TTC bus tickets ? I understand the need for diversity and to see people as human beings first.?'

One of her top priorities, she said, was affordable housing and making sure the voices of some of the community's most vulnerable residents are truly heard.

'I am running to ensure that our seniors and those with disabilities are heard, their concerns about affordable housing, so their children are not leaving Aurora and making it difficult for them to build relationships with their children or even having companionship here in the Town they were raised.

'I am running so our youth are heard. I do not want Aurora that our youth are running away from. We want Aurora where our youth are served and can be home. Young adult growing here, sports and recreation and tourism need to be revitalized.?'

To this end, Durrant pointed out the Town of Aurora has slipped down Macleans Magazine's ranking of most livable communities from 11 to 95, a 'mediocre' record, she said.

'Our kids are going to be raised in a community becoming an expensive ghetto. With weed shops popping up on every corner, they make us believe it is only affordable housing that will make us look like a ghetto because we misunderstand the conception of what affordability is. Business are moving out of Aurora, businesses are closed, [there's] lack of proper infrastructure for families, adults and children. How does that not concern us?'

'Do we want to reward mediocre? Do we want to reward regression, poor service and maintain the status quo because we're uncomfortable with change? We can do better, Aurora. We have the resources here to do better.'

'I [will see myself] as successful when my community succeeds and when the quality of life of my community members is enhanced. That is what success means to me. As a community we can no longer allow members to be left behind. We are our brother's keeper. It is unacceptable for friends, brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, grandparents, neighbours struggling without anyone providing the necessary assistance. The necessary assistance and comfort. We should at least be willing to listen to the residents' concerns. We would be naïve to think that we can please everyone but we can listen to their concerns.?'

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