

## Aurora Votes 2022: Ward 2 candidate Alison Connolly aims to be advocate for long-term care



As a retired Court Officer with the Toronto Police of more than 27 years, Alison Connolly has tackled and witnessed many societal challenges and, in retirement, she is looking to be a voice at the table to tackle issues very close to home.

Connolly is running to represent the issues and concerns of her neighbours in Ward 2 in this October's Municipal Election. There are many issues in Ward 2 big and small, she says, but top of her list is being an advocate for long-term care within the Aurora community.

'There are some issues in Aurora that are very concerning to me,' she says. 'People - family members, friends - said to me, 'You know what? You're always out there anyway at these functions, so why don't you run for Council?' I thought, why not? I couldn't give them an honest answer why not. I'm retired now, so this may be the time.'

'My dad is 91 and he was a very active member of our community, and the Aurora Soccer Club, for many, many years. He has mobility issues and the long-term care system is awful. He's on a waiting list and my sister and I have taken care of him for the last two years. For long-term care, there's a list you have to get on through a social worker who comes to your home and the waiting list is two to eleven years long.'

Connolly retired a year earlier than she intended to become a caregiver alongside her sister and the experience has given her a mission to improve the lives of those who are following similar paths.

'People who are just experiencing this now, they're looking at two or more years if you want to stay in Aurora and people don't want to move their loved ones out of Town; they want to be able to visit them daily or at least a few times a week to make sure everything is okay. It may not be a [specifically] municipal issue, but I think for Council and the Mayor there's the Region you can go to. You can have all the support at the Council level. You can get to the Region and you can get to the Province. We're Aurora and we want this (long-term care spaces) in Aurora.'

Also a top concern for Connolly, a resident of Aurora for 54 years, is downtown revitalization.

Over the last six decades, she's seen businesses in the downtown core come and go, but senses there's a lot of positivity on the horizon.

'I love Town Square and I can't wait for the Aurora United Church (and associated retirement home) to get built. Once all that

construction is done, it's going to be amazing down there but there are still a few things we need to get in there. I want to make Aurora [seen] as one of the 10 Prettiest Towns in Ontario and I know we can do that. It's there and the BIA has done an amazing job. The downtown core looks good, we're getting there, but we have more to do.?

Given her family's background as sport builders in the community, recreation is also an issue close to Connolly's heart. As the soccer and baseball seasons wind down for the fall, there needs to be a good place in Aurora where teams can practice and play indoors over the fall and winter.

?Our Diggers Softball Team, for instance, won all of Ontario but they need a place to practice,? she says. ?A few years ago, they were practicing in an elementary school gym. The coach did amazing with the pitching and catching but, other than that, there's not really much you can do in a small gym and we need that. We have athletes here who are very talented ? both boys and girls.?

Over the balance of the election season, Connolly says she's looking forward to meeting more of her neighbours and hearing more of their concerns. A proponent of the Ward System, she's less convinced of the fact there are no rules to state that you must live in the ward you hope to represent (?I think everyone should,? she says) but it's an opportunity to get down to the specifics ? like looking at infrastructure issues in each community.

?I have been here for 54 years and I have seen a lot,? she says. ?I just want to get the long-term care issue out there. Whether I'm elected or not, I want people to be aware of it. Whether I'm elected or not, I am going to try my best to get that long-term care in Aurora. Even if it is 25 beds, that's huge for Aurora.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter