

Aurora Votes 2022: Ward 5 candidate Steve Fleck is advocate for active transportation



As a 20-year resident of Aurora, Steve Fleck has seen the community "grow and evolve exponentially" and, as the community experiences what he describes as "some tipping point challenges in the last 20 to 30 years," he wants to be there to advocate for the concerns of his neighbours.

Fleck, an athlete and sports announcer, is one of five candidates vying to be the next Councillor for Ward 5. A newer section of the Aurora community, it's a neighbourhood he describes as "the happiness ward" as most people he's met on the campaign trail thus far have been very positive about the current direction of the Town.

But, that being said, there are some challenges that are going to face Ward 5 "and the community as a whole" in the next few years.

"The last two Councils have been very active in developing (the updated) Official Plan, but that has to change and evolve," he says. "We're about to run out of land to build housing on, so what happens then? How does Aurora keep going with no more land to build? It's that classic suburban sprawl which makes up the better part of Aurora. Those are the kinds of things that pulled me into this race at a high level.

"At a lower level, I think the move to wards is something I found attractive. I like that local representation and, frankly, talking at the doors everyone is a fan of it. We will have our local representative who can speak on our behalf. I am also cognizant of the fact that Aurora is of a size where you're not just talking about Ward 5 issues, which can be kind of minor in the grand scheme of things. There are bigger issues like what I talk about like how does Aurora grow and evolve? Where's the development going to happen? What's it going to look like? These are things we'll have to work on going forward."

One of the things he says he's especially "passionate" about is active transportation.

As the Town updates its Active Transportation Master Plan, there is, he says, room for improvement on how it is implemented that could be a "huge win-win" for the community.

"A few people I have [met at the door] have brought up that [Ward 5 is] close to the GO station but far enough that they need some other way to get there other than their car," he says, adding the station is exactly 1.3 km from his home in the ward. "I look forward to [the Plan] if I'm going to be on the next Council, having a look at that data and information to see if there are things that can be implemented.

‘On some of the social media message boards, there was talk about how Aurora had slumped from 11th to 24th on a ranking of best towns to live in and I think what Aurora has to do, if you're going to move up in that ranking, is something really audacious – a good audacious that is going to set Aurora apart and make people come here. That GO station is very strategically located and a lot of people don't realize that; it's strategically located for the Aurorans who want to use it but also for people to come up from Toronto or down from Barrie.’

Town Square is something he supports in general towards this goal as ‘a good thing’, and while he says people have concerns over its costs, he would like further clarification on how the facility will be ‘utilized’ once complete.

‘I know there are people who are opposed to it because of the cost and maybe they don't see the value in something like that, but my sense is some Council members saw what was going in in Newmarket and thought, ‘Let's get that going in Aurora.’ Yonge Street is a main artery and you can't maintain that vibe that you have on Main Street Newmarket on Yonge unless you're really willing to bite the bullet, restrict traffic, and do that sort of European traffic calming and controlling, but that means that people get there by other means – and that gets back to active transportation.’

As a high-performance athlete, Fleck says this fall's Council race will be the hardest race he's tackled yet ‘because there are so many factors that are beyond my control,’ but what he can control, he says, is what he does.

‘I am taking a high-performance athletic line from this: I can control what I do,’ he says. ‘It should never get petty. It should never get down in the gutter. We're professionals here and we, all of us, who take on this task are good communicators and should communicate as such from a high level. There is no need to be negative, petty, or go to the gutter on issues. We can work together. We might disagree, that's fine, that's the nature of life, but we can still be professionals and move forward.’

‘People are very calm in Ward 5. They think everything is amazing and the complaints are few and far between. They're complimentary and thanking me for running, and I'm pumped about that. It's encouraging.’

By Brock Weir
Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter