

Aurorans expect 'collaboration and cooperation': Mayor



By Brock Weir

Upon receiving the chains of office four years ago, Mayor Geoff Dawe stated it was a new beginning for the Town of Aurora.

Four years later, upon receiving the chains once again, he says Aurora prospered by focusing on the 'big picture' and bringing forward a 'collective vision.'

Mayor Dawe made his remarks last week at the inaugural meeting of the 2014 - 2018 Council term. Issuing an invitation to the collective 'Mayor, Council, the community at large' to work together to make a renewed collective vision a reality.

He issued this challenge before a nearly standing-room-only crowd at Town Hall. It was a sea of familiar faces as he looked out on the room, including numerous campaign volunteers and supporters, his wife, Henny, and two of their three daughters.

'Four years ago, I stood here and stated not only was this a new beginning in my life, but I believed it was a new beginning for the Town of Aurora,' he said. 'Residents at the time spoke very clearly about their expectations for the future. As a Council, our mandate was very clear: Aurora wanted positive change and a Council that would work together to give taxpayers' value for their hard-earned tax dollars.

'It was time to work as a team to chart a course that reflected a vision for Aurora and establish policies that would bring that vision to life, and that is what we did.'

Looking back over the past four years, Mayor Dawe cited the development of the Youth Centre at the newly-renovated Aurora Family Leisure Complex, a project which had been discussed and debated for the better part of two decades, the development of a rolling 10-year capital forecast to anticipate future municipal needs, reworked reserve funds to make sure that these needs can be taken care of, and high ratings in national surveys as 'solid proof' that Council was on the right track.

'This is solid proof our Town benefited by ensuring Council focused on the big picture, policy and vision, and tasking our highly qualified staff to provide the professional advice and skills necessary to implement our collective vision'at a reasonable cost,' he said. 'Tonight, we begin a new term of Council and as we begin, it is incumbent on this new Council to understand once again our residents have spoken very clearly about their expectations.

'They want a Council that is going to continue to work together in the spirit of collaboration and cooperation. I believe this Council is ready to work together to get down to business and I am looking forward to continuing our commitment of getting things done.'

Over the course of the 2014 election campaign, Mayor Dawe said he often spoke about leadership, community and stability, and expanding on his commitments to those principles in a 'clear and understandable' way so people could know 'exactly what to expect' over the next four years so, at the end of the term, residents could judge whether or not he had 'honoured the trust and commitment' they placed in him.

'I believe the heart of leadership is integrity; clearly stating and abiding by principles that people can count on,' he noted. 'As your leader, I am committed to continuing to listen to both my community and my Council colleagues and work towards a culture of collaboration, engagement and dialogue to make decisions that are in the best interests of the community as a whole.'

'I believe that leadership is a process of influence between leaders and followers with a shared sense of purpose. I believe that truly effective leaders create an environment with a shared vision of community that believe, as I do, that when you belong to something you work harder to nurture and grow it.'

It was clear over the course of the campaign, he said, that many shared this vision, but it will take more than sharing the vision to make it a reality. Community interests need to be given a voice, and opportunities need to be provided to contribute and work together to a greater good, informing Council so they can make informed decisions.

'Each of us has a vested interest in our community, however, to truly belong we must each accept ownership and accountability for our shared vision,' he said. 'I believe these are exciting times for Aurora. Your message has been heard, your expectations are clear. The future holds great promise, but it will not be without some challenges, challenges that your new Council is committed to working to develop together a 'Made in Aurora' solution.'

'I would like to challenge you to engage with your new Councillors, your friends and neighbours to make this an exceptional four years, an exceptional four years where we build a community that reflects our shared vision, where all community interests have a voice, and where your contribution is actively encouraged and valued. After all, we are in this together.'