

Aurora's old flag and crest should fly once again, says Councillor



By Brock Weir

History and symbol have the power to bring people together and connect people to the world around them.

But, according to Councillor Jeff Thom, Aurora can foster this connection by plugging into the past.

When Councillor Thom threw his hat into the political ring last year, he jazzed up his campaign headquarters ? his dad's garage ? with Aurora's Flag, a cross of St. Andrew's, a variant of the flag of Scotland, emblazoned with Aurora's crest. After tweeting out a picture of his decorating scheme, however, he says he noticed a curious reaction.

?When we were playing hockey in Town back in the 1990s, someone procured a Town flag and we took it to tournaments and stuff like that down in the States and when I tweeted the picture, I had a really interesting response in people saying they hadn't seen that flag in years. I started paying more attention and realised the flag was nowhere to be seen.?

A motion before Council this week could make the flag's absence, well, history.

Flying above Town Hall and other municipal facilities is a banner bearing Aurora's corporate logo. If Councillor Thom's motion is passed this week, the historic flag, crafted and approved by Council in 1988, coinciding with Aurora's 125th anniversary, will be waving once again.

In his motion, the Councillor sites Aurora's Official Flag as a ?reflection of Aurora's distinct history and culture, and a symbol of the continuity of our community, which stretches back over 150 years.?

The crest in the centre of the flag, first pitched by Aurora's first Council in 1863 before formal adoption in the 1920s, is particularly evocative of the Town's history, incorporating symbols such as a Fleury Plough to represent the Town's industrial history, mountains representing the rolling hills of the moraine, and a rising sun to represent ?Aurora?, the Roman goddess of the dawn.

?I believe in protocol; we have an official flag, so I think we should fly it,? says Councillor Thom. ?I think the crest and the

symbolism behind the flag are really important, especially in today's society. Symbols are important, history is important, and I think they have the capacity to bring communities together because it connects us with our past. Whether your family has lived in Aurora since the days of Charles Doan in 1963, or whether you just moved into Town yesterday, it still has that capacity because symbols connect us to our place in Ontario.

?Local symbols are just as important as national and provincial symbols and I think maintaining them, protecting them and preserving them is important.?

His drive to restore the former flag, however, is not a sleight of any sort on Aurora's corporate logo, which was adopted by Council in 2005, he says. It might bear the Town's slogan of 'You're in Good Company', but the old crest will say so much more, he says. Corporate logos have purpose and importance, but that does not mean it should be on a flag.

?Flags are symbols and are very important to people and the one I am proposing to bring back to prominence is no different,? he says. ?The flag has only been around for just under 30 years, but the crest has been around since Aurora began. If someone was to look up and see the current flag, they might say, 'I'm in Good Company, that's great,' but if they look up and see our old flag, they might ask what the plough symbolizes, or what the sun symbolizes, and inevitably you will have to get into a discussion on the history of the Town.

?For me, it is important from more of a protocol standpoint, but also a historical and heritage standpoint. We want to preserve the heritage of Aurora, and this is a pretty easy way to do that.?