

IN GOOD COMPANY: A Safe and Happy Holiday

By Mayor Geoff Dawe

2015 is coming to an end but we are lucky to have a chance for a fresh new start in 2016!

I hope that all of you have the opportunity to spend some time with your family and friends celebrating the holiday season.

If you're looking for something to do to ring in the New Year, don't miss Aurora's Family First Night on Wednesday, December 31 from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex. This event is sure to be great family fun with games, free activities and community togetherness! Visit www.aurora.ca for more details.

I'm happy to share the good news that Aurora Town Council approved the 2016 operating budget at \$58.2 Million on December 8. The capital budget was previously approved at \$12.4 Million at the Council meeting on October 27.

I was very pleased with the budget process this year ? Council had many tools and processes in place to make effective and efficient decisions with minimal impact on residents. Council and staff worked collaboratively to achieve a budget target of a 1.8 per cent increase. This amounts to an additional Town share tax of \$31 per year on a home with an assessed value of \$500,000.

We often refer to the strong health of the Town's finances and it's important that our residents understand the foundation behind this statement. I will address this in more detail next month, but suffice it to say our balance sheet is quite strong!

I have always believed that you cannot run a government like a business ? but you can be ?business-like?. Over the last five years, I have championed the refinement of the Town's financial planning processes. We have a detailed Asset Management and Ten-Year Capital Investment and Funding Plan that evaluate our individual assets and helps us to decide rehabilitation and replacement needs. The Town, coupled with other municipalities and associations, continue to lobby the federal and provincial governments for additional revenue sources and more infrastructure funding. The Town must make tough decisions to continue to address our infrastructure funding challenges and ensure that our assets are replaced in time.

The Town continues to ensure optimal and efficient use of tax funds in our daily operations by eliminating duplication, waste and improving our services where possible. I encourage you to learn more about our 2016 budget by visiting www.aurora.ca/budget.

On another note, Aurora Town Council recently approved a Parking Permit Program to address parking concerns in Aurora. Staff developed a program that addresses permit parking around Town Park, ad-hoc overnight parking and special consideration parking for RVs. The parking program is still in development and is set to start in early 2016.

Also, the Town has received a \$21,615 RBC Learn-to-Play Project grant. Aurora is one of 199 organizations from across the country to receive this grant. The Town is working collaboratively with Sport Aurora, through the Activate Aurora Working Group, to support the projects associated with this grant. These funds help our community to build and deliver quality sport and recreation programs to increase physical activity and participation in sports programs amongst our youth. We are excited about the possibilities that this grant will help us realize.

I also would like to welcome our new CAO, Doug Nadorozny, who will be starting on January 11, 2016. More information on Doug's background can be found on our website and I won't repeat that here. However, I do think it should be pointed out that there were over 120 applicants for this position! A clear indicator that Aurora is considered a desirable place to work.

In closing, during this holiday season I encourage everyone to think about the less fortunate members of our community. Even a ?Loonie? or a ?Twoonie? can make a difference, so please support our local charities and food bank. Providing support and goodwill is truly the best gift you can give over the holidays.

All the best, please have a safe and happy holiday!