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IN GOOD COMPANY: New Term, New Challenges

By Mayor Geoff Dawe

It is great to be back in the pages of The Auroran, following a spirited municipal election campaign!

I would like to thank editor Brock Weir for generously providing space once again for my monthly In Good Company article. The Auroran offers a great platform to reach out to Aurora residents, and I am pleased to have the opportunity to provide information that affects our community.

I would like to thank the thousands of Aurorans who exercised their democratic right to vote on October 27 (or at one of our many advance polls), and for honouring me with a second mandate to serve as your Mayor. I would like to give due credit to all those who tirelessly volunteered during the election campaign and to Town staff for organizing an extremely well-run election process.

Our Council will look somewhat different in the 2014-2018 term, with the election of three newcomers: Harold Kim, Tom Mrakas and Jeff Thom. I am excited at the prospect of new ideas and perspectives, and I look forward to our future collaborations. Welcome aboard!

As we welcome new members to Aurora Town Council, we also say good-bye to two familiar faces: Councillor Evelyn Buck and Councillor John Gallo. I would like to thank Evelyn and John for their years of dedicated service to our Town and unwavering commitment to our residents. Best wishes to you both!

With a number of Councillors returning, we have a strong core of experience to begin the term in December. I am hopeful of a very productive start, as we will be getting right down to business, particularly with our annual Budget approval process.

On the matter of pressing business, most readers will be aware that Highland Gate Golf Club has closed its operations to explore ?other uses? for the property. As I write this article, no sale has taken place and the Town has not received any applications or permit requests with respect to the property.

If a planning and development application is made concerning the property, the Town will carefully evaluate all proposals to ensure that community and environmental concerns are addressed. This will include full community consultation and working with all stakeholders to ensure the best interests of the community and environment are balanced against any potential construction.

This is an important issue for our community and I intend to provide whatever information I can to keep residents informed. The Town has a statement on the front page of its website www.aurora.ca which will be updated as this issue evolves.

Not unexpectedly, but rather unfortunately, misinformation was a recurring issue during the election. While I addressed some issues during the campaign, and others can be dismissed as hyperbole, I would like to address concerns that were raised about the Town's finances.

An oft perpetuated myth was the suggestion the Town is somehow in dire financial straits. This doomsday scenario could not be further from the truth. The Town is in an enviable situation with reserves in excess of $50 million! Additionally, over the course of the last term, we have built our capital reserves to better manage our future infrastructure needs.

Gossip and innuendo will always happen. They seem to be staples during an election campaign. But gross mischaracterizations need to be addressed. The Town is extremely well-managed and was recently highlighted as the best place to live in York Region and one of the best places in Ontario to invest.

For full details of our finances, I invite you to read for yourselves at www.aurora.ca/budget

Before signing off, I would like to thank the members of our armed forces, whom we celebrated on Remembrance Day at the Aurora Cenotaph. We had a beautiful day to remember these heroes and it was very gratifying to see so many paying their respects.

We have some great events coming up in December, including our Santa Under the Stars parade on Saturday and our Tree Lighting Ceremony on December 3. These are great fun for the whole family. I hope to see you there!