

IN GOOD COMPANY: Saying goodbye to 2016

By Mayor Geoff Dawe

As 2016 comes to an end, this is a great time to reflect and be thankful for a wonderful year.

The holiday season is a special time to reflect on past achievements, focus on important people in our lives and give back to those who are in need. As the new year approaches, we enter a cycle of renewal, new beginnings and a fresh start.

I am excited for all the great things to come in 2017, especially as we are celebrating Canada's 150th birthday!

I am pleased to announce that Aurora's 2017 Capital and Operating Budgets are approved. The Town's operating budget was approved at \$60.8 million with an \$18.2 million capital budget to rehabilitate roads, waterlines, Town facilities and other Town-owned infrastructure.

Council and staff worked collaboratively to achieve Council's budget target of inflation (2.1 per cent) plus 1 per cent for fiscal strategy to ensure funding for the future. The 3.1 per cent increase to the tax levy translates to an additional \$80.52 on a home with an average assessed value of \$770,000.

Our budget is fiscally responsible yet ensures that we are accommodating the needs of our residents. With a population of more than 60,000, Aurora is the fifth largest municipality in the Regional Municipality of York. Our population has more than doubled its size since 1990. And, although it appears that the Town is still growing rapidly, we are actually approaching build-out and that represents a significant change in how we need to budget.

Council has been, and will continue to be, diligent in accountable budgeting practices as we plan for the future of our community. We are extremely grateful for all the feedback we received throughout the budget process. We recognize and appreciate the opinions of our citizens and we thank you for taking an active role and interest in your community. Council and staff consider and evaluate every budget request and work diligently to incorporate suggestions. For more information on the budget, please visit aurora.ca/budget.

I am also delighted to share the news that Council approved a motion regarding the Cultural Precinct revitalization project. In early December, the results of the Cultural Precinct community consultation was presented to Council.

The Cultural Precinct is a three-block area bordered by Yonge Street to the west, Larmont Street to the east, Metcalfe and Church Streets to the south and Mosley Street to the north. The area includes the Town Park and Armoury and the former library and seniors' centre, known as Library Square.

Council approved a motion to:

- ? Preserve the main features of the Town Park.
- ? Have staff report back on specific enhancements to Town Park for consideration by Council.
- ? Have staff report back on estimates for repurposing of the Armoury and to initiate a design exercise.
- ? Proceed with an application for the demolition of Town-owned buildings at 52 and 56 Victoria Street pending the relocation of tenants and begin a design exercise for redevelopment of Library Square.

Council is very pleased to move forward with plans to revitalize Aurora's downtown core. With the input from residents, staff and Council we can begin to develop this area to become a central point for community gatherings, celebrations and an attraction for tourists. For more information on the Cultural Precinct please visit, aurora.ca/culturalprecinct.

Thank you to the patrons of the Town's annual Santa Under the Stars event for their food donations to the Aurora Food Pantry. Your generosity and kindness will make a difference for families in Aurora during this holiday season. Don't miss our last event for the year, Aurora's Family First Night on Saturday, December 31 from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex. Celebrate the new year with fun, free activities, shows and more. Visit aurora.ca/firstnight for additional details.

Stay connected to the Town. Visit the Town's website, read the local Notice Board, subscribe to our social media feeds and sign-up for our monthly e-newsletter, Aurora Matters.

My door is always open, please feel free to email me with any questions or comments about the Town at mayor@aurora.ca. Wishing you all a wonderful holiday season filled with happiness and joy!