

Mayor, incoming Council close one term and open another

By Brock Weir

The 2014 - 2018 Aurora Council met for the last time on Tuesday night and while it was a time to say goodbye to four members who would not be returning for the new term that formally began on Saturday, it was an opportunity for one member of the class of 2018 - 2022 to offer some insight on how they saw their mandate for the next four years.

Councillor Wendy Gaertner, who came second to Councillor Harold Kim in the October 22 Municipal Election said in her final remarks of the outgoing term that although the outgoing Council accomplished "some good work," there is still much to be done - particularly when it comes to protecting Aurora's stable neighbourhoods.

"I must say I am very disappointed that this Council was not able to put any protections in place for stable neighbourhoods, and I think the residents are looking forward to the next Council to do that," said Councillor Gaertner after praising some of Council's accomplishments, as well as the work of the various citizen advisory committees Council has, particularly the Heritage Advisory Committee.

"Finally, this Council made a decision about Library Square. Good on us. I am concerned, however, that we didn't do any detailed construction estimates, a business plan or an operations plan, and I am looking forward to the next Council to do that as was promised at this table. To Mayor Dawe, Councillor Abel, Councillor Thom and Councillor Pirri, this is a really hard job. Nobody can understand it unless they have been in this seat. I also thank you for your service and I wish you a good and successful future." The other four members who are part of the new Council term - Mayor Tom Mrakas, Deputy Mayor Harold Kim, Councillor Sandra Humfries and Councillor Michael Thompson, however, focused most of their final speeches of the term to pay tribute to Geoff Dawe, John Abel, Paul Pirri and Jeff Thom for their time served.

"Over the four years we have done some incredible work as a team and I want to thank Councillors Pirri, Thom and Deputy Mayor Abel for their service and commitment to the community. Mayor Dawe, I want to thank you for your commitment," said then-councillor Mrakas. "You brought decorum to the Council when it most needed it and I think the community appreciates it, I do as well, and I think everyone around this table does as well. Thank you to all of you and thank you to this Council for the work they have done for this community."

Councillor Kim, who is now entering his second term on Council, credited the first with being the most enlightening and "professionally enjoyable season of my life."

"I think part of the life adventure we go through is all about the relationships and the people you meet along the way. Councillor Perri, Councillor Thom, Mayor Dawe, Deputy Mayor Abel and all of us around here, I can say that over the last four years I can call you guys friends. After all the heated debates and so forth, you guys are still counted as friends and I hope that we can still keep in touch.

"Athletes and hockey players when they retire say what they miss the most is the locker room environment and what I'll miss with every one of you is the locker room environment. Outside of this chamber we will still keep in touch and I look forward to that. Thank you for all your contributions. You guys will definitely be missed by me."

From Councillor Thompson's perspective, the four years of a Council term go by very quickly and, over the last four, he said it had been a "true honour and privilege and serve residents" and work with the other eight members around the table.

"I truly believe that it has been a very successful term, that we have done a wonderful job moving the Town forward, added to the quality of our residents' lives," he said. "When you look at the accomplishments that we have done over the course of this term, a few people have mentioned some, but I look to the completion of the Leisure Centre renovation, we certainly look to the opening of the museum, the Joint Operations Centre, Library Square, Niagara College coming to Town, the Armoury. There are some significant ones, but look at the Sesquicentennial, the naming of the Tim Jones Trail, so many things were accomplished this term and I think we should all be very proud of that.

"To my friends who are not coming back, they say that every ending is a new beginning and I certainly wish you all of the best in your future endeavours. It has been an honour to serve with you and I look forward to continuing the adventure."

The most fulsome speech of the evening went to Councillor Sandra Humfries, who paid particular tribute to the accomplishments of Geoff Dawe, presenting him with a token of esteem on behalf of the Town at the conclusion of her remarks.

Speaking specifically to her own experience, Councillor Humfries, who, along with Councillor Thompson, is at the start of her third term, said she "learned so much" from the four outgoing members.

"I know that you're going to move on to some amazing opportunities in the future and I know your love of Aurora is not stopping

here,? she said. ?You're going to continue to give back to the Town like you always have and I can't wait to work with you in a different way and a different format and make our Town the amazing, incredible place it is to live. You give of yourself wholeheartedly. There is no doubt about it and it has been a true honour. I mean it from the bottom of my heart. On moving forward, I would like to speak specifically about our Mayor, Geoff Dawe. Mayor Geoff Dawe came here eight years ago? He came to us when times were quite turbulent, and he turned things back to a stable, well-oiled machine. This town functions well, it functions beautifully. We have services that are performing the way they need to perform.

?Previous Councils have all done a great job but we have made decisions here that were not made before, including Library Square, the Joint Operations Centre. These are very tough decisions to make. The public may not see it as positively as we did, but we did the right things and we're going to continue to do those right things. Through your leadership, integrity and honour and your honesty, you have brought us here. If it wasn't for you, we would not be here.?